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IRELAND FROM THE UNION
TO
CATHOLIC EMANCIPATION

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"*Homo sum ; humanum nil a me alienum puto.*"
TERENCE.

"*I am a man ; there's naught that touches man*
That is not my concern."

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DANIEL O'CONNELL

A portrait of the Emancipation year

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IRELAND

FROM THE UNION TO CATHOLIC EMANCIPATION

A STUDY OF SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, AND ADMINISTRATIVE CONDITIONS

1800–1829

BY

D. A. CHART, M.A.

Author of "*The Story of Dublin*"

WITH ELEVEN ILLUSTRATIONS

LONDON

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TO

MY WIFE

IN TOKEN OF GRATITUDE FOR
HER INVALUABLE ASSISTANCE
THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED

PREFACE

A GERMAN poet finely compares life to a great loom, where countless threads of different hues and characters are perpetually in motion, weaving, as they cross and recross, a vast and multicoloured fabric. The life of a nation is not all politics, nor administration, nor trade, nor literature, nor social service, nor domesticity, but a compound of these and many other factors.

In the hope, then, that I may be able to realise for the reader a fairly comprehensive picture of the conditions of Irish life during an interesting period, I have written this volume, dealing with what seem to me to be its most important aspects. The subject is enormous in its ramifications—in fact, the sections to which I have assigned chapters would easily furnish matter for books; and, indeed, it is to be hoped that later writers will treat in greater detail many of the topics to which I have been able to make only a brief allusion. The natural limitations of the layman beset any non-professional person who tries to write of such subjects as are dealt with in Chapters V., VIII., and XII. However, I trust

that, generally speaking, the work will be considered a contribution to knowledge. Some of the sections were practically unexplored, and much of the volume is pioneer work, which, will perhaps be useful to my successors.

The sources utilised have been too numerous to particularise in any great detail. By the kind permission of the Chief Secretary and the Master of the Rolls, I have been allowed to make use of documents in the State Paper Office, Record Tower, Dublin Castle, bearing on the social and economic condition of Ireland between the years 1790 and 1831. These have been supplemented by reference to a mass of printed official papers and Parliamentary reports. Among general authorities for the period may be mentioned the following :—Wakefield's *Account of Ireland, Statistical and Political;* Newenham's *View of the Circumstances of Ireland;* Mr. Litton Falkiner's *Studies in Irish History and Biography;* Mr. Lecky's *Leaders of Public Opinion in Ireland;* Mr. MacDonagh's *A Viceroy's Postbag;* the *Cambridge Modern History*, *vol. x.* (Mr. H. W. C. Davis's article on Catholic Emancipation). There was not an abundance of works available for reference as regards the more special side of the subject, but I have made use of, among others, Miss Murray's *Commercial Relations between England and Ireland*, Rev. Dr. Kingsmill Moore's *An Unwritten Chapter in the History of Education*, Mr. R. Curtis's *History*

of the Royal Irish Constabulary. Other obligations will be acknowledged in the text or the footnotes.

I owe a debt of thanks to Mr. James Mills, I.S.O., Deputy Keeper of the Records, for his kindness in reading the manuscript, and for many very valuable criticisms and suggestions; also to Dr. T. E. Harvey, Dr. C. J. MacGarry, and my other colleagues of the Public Record Office, for much assistance and advice. To Dr. Harvey I owe a special meed of gratitude for his unwearied exertions in correcting proofs and helping to revise the manuscript for the press. From various other members of the Civil Service I have received a great quantity of useful information, often procured by them for me at the cost of much labour and time. For this, too, I am very much obliged, knowing as I do the trouble which searches of this kind usually involve.

Among those to whom I am specially indebted in this way are Mr. W. G. Adams of the Department of Agriculture, Mr. J. Smith of the Lunatic Asylums Office, Dr. Ninian M. Falkiner of the General Register Office, Mr. P. J. Walsh and Mr. E. Fahy of the Paymaster-General's Office, Dr. A. P. Magill of the Land Commission, Mr. M. Hynes, Librarian of the Chief Secretary's Office, and Mr. W. A. Magill of the Dublin Metropolitan Police Office.

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by permission of the Keeper of the State Papers and of the authorities of the National Gallery, National Library, and Museum of Science and Art, and to the staff of these institutions, particularly to Mr. W. G. Strickland, Mr. T. W. Lyster, Mr. G. Coffey, and Mr. E. C. R. Armstrong, I would wish to express my thanks for their kindly co-operation. For the illustration showing a Lancasterian school at work I am indebted to Rev. Dr. H. Kingsmill Moore, in whose possession is a book containing the original.

The photographs of objects in the Museum have been taken by Mr. A. Redding, the official photographer; all the remainder, with one exception, by Mr. W. Lawrence of Sackville Street.

As with my former book, the task of collecting material has been immensely lightened by the courtesy and consideration which I have encountered from all whom I found it necessary to approach on the subject.

D. A. C.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

OUTLINE OF POLITICAL HISTORY, 1800–1829

PAGE

Defects of the Union—Failure to relieve Roman Catholics —Emmet's insurrection—Catholic agitation renewed— Daniel O'Connell and the forces against him—Political conversion of Ulster—Hostility or indifference of British parties—O'Connell's earlier methods—Failure of negotiations for State control of Church—Administrations of Peel and Wellesley—Catholic Association and "Catholic Rent"—Rural voters revolt against landlord influence—Clare election—Surrender of the Cabinet —The Emancipation Bill 1–18

CHAPTER I

TRADE, COMMERCE, AND MANUFACTURE

Divisions of the subject—Internal and external trade— Increase in exports—Agricultural produce—Corn trade, Ireland as the "Granary of England"—Salt provisions, bacon, butter—Distilling discouraged, but brewing favoured—Linen industry receives special attention— Linen Board—Imports mainly manufactured goods and tropical products—Mines, gold, coal, &c.—Nature of internal trade—Decay of textiles, cottons, and woollens—Loans to distressed employers—New wants and new activities produced by the Union—State interference with trade—Defects of Protection as a working system—Embargoes—Commercial community, prominence of Quakers—"Support home industry"—Shortcomings of producers—Condition of labouring classes —Severity towards trade unions—Turbulence of workmen—Their hostility to strangers 19–46

CHAPTER II

FINANCE, TAXATION, AND CURRENCY

PAGES

Simplicity of pre-Union finance—Army and navy votes—Civil List—Pension abuses—War and rebellion lead to an accumulation of debt—The Union financial bargain—The burden of independence and the burden of empire—Amalgamation of the Exchequers—Description of fiscal system—A distressed Treasury and its devices—Taxes on warmth and light—Wide scope of Customs and Excise—Increasing tendency to tax luxuries—Stamp and Post Offices—Lotteries—Tontines—Comparative statements of revenue and expenditure for 1808, 1826, and 1906—Advances for public works—Heavier burden more easily borne—Increase of Civil Service expenditure—Bureaucratic Socialism—Currency troubles—Bank of Ireland and other tokens—Private note issues—Reform of the coinage . . . 47–75

CHAPTER III

AGRICULTURE AND LAND TENURE

Prominence of tillage—Potato, corn and flax culture—Cattle—Sheep reared for wool, not mutton—Pigs—Dairying—General inefficiency of agriculture and its causes—A serf-like peasantry—Systems of land tenure—"Grand Seigneur" landlords—Short-sighted policy in leases—"Absentees, Agents, and Middlemen"—Oppression of tenants—Causes of agrarian disturbance—Combinations to limit rent—Survivals of feudal and tribal periods—"Services"—"Truck" system—Rundale—Farming as an adjunct to weaving—Public and private efforts to encourage agriculture—Corn bounties—Bog Improvement Commissioners—Dublin and Farming Societies 76–97

CHAPTER IV

THE LIFE OF THE PEOPLE

PAGES

Classes in town and country—Decadence of the gentry—"Buckeens"—Rural proletariat—Housing—Construction of a mud cabin—Low standards of living and their consequence—Overcrowding in towns—"Lodging Cellars"—Urban dietary—Clothing—Rates of wages—Popular diversions—Fighting as an amusement—Dancing—Wakes—Horse-racing—Bad influence of lotteries—Intellectual life—Newspapers—Their political partisanship and neglect of local news—Journalistic improvements—Theatres—Lectures—Lack of a literature—Its place supplied by ballads and legends—State interference with individual freedom—Aliens and suspects—Anxiety to help the poor—State coal-yards—Relief of distress in 1800, 1801, 1817, 1822—Permanent relief organisations—Houses of Industry, variations of policy as to—Treatment of the pauper—Scandals of the Foundling Hospital 98–126

CHAPTER V

RELIGION

Established Church—First Fruits Commissioners—The tithe grievance—Clerical place-hunting—Careless and non-resident clergy—Process of reformation—Presbyterian Church and State control—Augmentation of Regium Donum—Methodists—Quakers—Catholicism, its early timidity and helplessness—Increasing friendliness of Government—A tacit alliance from 1800 to 1805—O'Connell's use of the Church as a political instrument—The "Priest in Politics"—Protestant proselytising agencies—Broils and boycottings—Prevalence of superstition 127–145

CHAPTER VI

EDUCATION

PAGES

Early history—Decadence of endowed schools—The proselytising policy—"Hedge Schools"—Commission of Inquiry condemns proselytism—The religious difficulty—Saurin on "Abstract Christianity"—Subsidy to Kildare Place Society—"Scripture without note or comment"—Lancaster and his system—Devices to save expense—Use of monitors, "sand desks," tablets, &c.—Narrow educational ideals—Liberal policy at Kildare Place—Rise of Catholic opposition—Secession of O'Connell—Unassisted Bible reading, its weak points—Foundation of National Education Board—Secondary education—Belfast and its Academical Institution—An embryo Northern University—Maynooth College and its short-lived lay school—Proposed Catholic college in Dublin University—General weakness of secondary education—Higher education—Trinity College . 146–166

CHAPTER VII

THE PUBLIC SERVICE

Prominence of State effort in Irish life—Civil Service abuses—Place-hunters and their correspondence—"Patentee" officers—Duties discharged by deputy—Sale of appointments—Absentee chiefs of departments—The too much trusted subordinate—A gradual reformation—Effects of parliamentary exposures—The financial consideration—Principles of new system—Outline of the chief departments—Declining powers of Lord Lieutenant, and rise of Chief and Under Secretaries—Control of the Irish Treasury—Customs—Excise—Stamp Office—Post Office—Its pioneer work—Divided authority and disputes—Origin and rapid development of Board of Works—Supply of stationery—Statistical and Registering Departments—The first census—The Ordnance Survey—Care of records—County government—The Grand Juries and their defects—Strength of present State position . 167–196

CHAPTER VIII

LAW AND ORDER

PAGES

A sad and perplexing subject—Various disturbing forces —Political conspiracy—Religious fanaticism (Orange and Ribbon)—Agrarian outrage—Smugglers—Party and faction fights—Weakness of local administration —The magistrates, their mistakes through ignorance, passion, or prejudice—Occasional indolence or timidity —Troubles of the "active magistrate"—Persecution of witnesses—Suspicious testimony—Tentative policy of the State—Special bodies for certain purposes—"Assistant Barristers"—Petty Sessions—Coming of a professional police and magistracy—The "Stipendiary Magistrates"—Origin of the Royal Irish Constabulary —The policing of Dublin—Ancient city watch—Sir Arthur Wellesley's reforms—Law Court abuses—State of the prisons—Moral and physical evils, neglect and extortion—Debtors—Development of a Prisons Board —Adoption of a "Penitentiary" system . . . 197–221

CHAPTER IX

THE MILITARY SYSTEM

Present problems similar to past—Attempts at invasion, causes of failure—Partial success of Humbert—Defensive methods, various schools of thought—The Fabian policy—A military census—Fortifications, Martello towers—"Mobility," telegraphs and signals—Soldiers doing police duty—Impossibility of concentration—Misconduct due to lack of discipline—*Personnel*—Recruits from gaols—Ex-rebels as soldiers—Justification by results—General good conduct of regulars—Militia, its weak points—Interchange of British and Irish forces —Militia as recruiting-ground for regulars—Conscription

PAGES

by means of the ballot—Ballot for an "Army of Reserve" —Origin of the Yeomanry—Its religious and political sympathies—Resemblances to Volunteers of 1782—A semi-military volunteer police—Partisanship its chief defect—Organisation as a fighting force—Volunteering to regulars—Ireland's military services to Great Britain 222–246

CHAPTER X

THE SEAFARING LIFE

Dangers of navigation—Lack of organisations to assist sailors — Absence of lifeboats — Inadequate lighthouses—Irish Lights taken over by Dublin Ballast Office — Privateers — Self-defence by merchantmen — Iniquities of impressment for the navy—Rebels in the fleet, their share in the mutiny at the Nore—Quarantine precautions—Customs troubles—Audacity and unscrupulousness of smugglers—Plundering of wrecks—Emigration—Hardships of Atlantic and cross-channel voyages—The Irish ports—Dublin—Construction of Howth and Kingstown harbours—Belfast—Waterford — Cork — Limerick — Londonderry — Galway — Irish fisheries—Improvement of status of merchant sailors —Effects of scientific progress 247–268

CHAPTER XI

INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

Backwardness of Ireland in 1800—Drawbacks of coach travelling — Slowness, danger, and expense — Weather difficulties—Highwaymen—Passenger boats on canals —Possible developments of inland navigation—Progress made in coaching, 1800 to 1829—Credit partly due to Post Office—"Expresses"—Transportation of goods . 269–277

CHAPTER XII

PUBLIC HEALTH, SANITATION, AND MUNICIPAL IMPROVEMENT

PAGES

The Cowpock Institution and free vaccination—The county infirmaries — Other hospitals and dispensaries — The coming of typhus—The Boards of Health—Instances of unfeeling behaviour towards sick—The epidemic in the cities—Disinfection as a safeguard—Results of overcrowding—Plague-spots in Dublin—Mortality in Cork and Dublin—Typhus as much a social as a medical problem—Prosperity as a cure for disease—Treatment of lunatics, the dangerous kept in gaol, the harmless allowed to wander about—Foundation of Richmond and other asylums — Dublin water supply, arrangements with the canal companies—Inadequacy of distribution system—"Public Fountains"—Demand for better sanitation — Sanitary reforms — Lighting — The coming of gas, failure of departmental efforts, success of private enterprise—The Westmoreland Street gasworks—Wide Streets Commissioners and the replanning of Dublin—Similar improvements in provincial towns—The Irish corporations mere political clubs, their administration seldom satisfactory — Belfast — Waterford — Cork—Galway—Limerick—Londonderry 278–301

CHAPTER XIII

A GENERAL REVIEW

Administrative reform—Britain as a moderating influence—Excessive centralisation, especially in finance—Economic progress and change—Comparative failure in treatment of religious and social questions—Neglect of agrarian problems — The educational settlement — Existence of a general progressive tendency . . 302–308

INDEX 309

ILLUSTRATIONS

DANIEL O'CONNELL . . . . . *Frontispiece*

A portrait of the Emancipation year (*Joly Collection, National Library*).

LETTER OF SIR A. WELLESLEY DIRECTING THE NOMINATION OF ROBERT PEEL FOR THE BOROUGH OF CASHEL. (*State Paper Office*) . *To face p.* 12

This was Peel's first seat in Parliament. It will be noticed that the future Duke of Wellington is so slightly acquainted with his nominee that he does not know his Christian name or address. These are supplied in a subsequent letter

"SILVER NOTE" OF MALAHIDE BANK FOR 3S. 9½D. (*State Paper Office*) . . . . . „ 72

3s. 9½d. represents 3½ shillings Irish currency, the old Irish shilling containing thirteen pence.

CONTEMPORARY COINS AND TOKENS. (*Royal Irish Academy Collection, National Museum*) . . „ 75

(*a*) Token for 1s. 1d. issued by Lord Charleville for Tullamore district. Legend, "Industry Shall Prosper," "Charleville Forest." 1802.

(*b*) Token for 1s. issued by Lord Sligo for Westport district. Legend, "Payable at Kelly's Estate, Each Friday Evenᵍ 6 o'clock." Undated, *circa* 1800–1825.

(*c*) "Harp" Penny of 1823 (the last distinctively Irish issue).

(*d*) Spanish silver coin of Charles IV., restamped for Irish local circulation with the words, "Payable at Castlecomer Colliery 5s. 5d." 1798.

(*e*) Halfpenny token issued by Messrs. Camac, Kyan, and Camac, Dublin and Ballymurtagh. 1793.

(*f*) Bank of Ireland 6s. token. 1804.

A Typical Irish Cabin, Early Nineteenth Century (*from an old engraving*) . . *To face p.* 101

There are no windows; a basket forms the chimney, and there is a cesspool beside the door.

A School on Lancaster's System (*from an engraving in possession of Rev. Dr. H. Kingsmill Moore*) . . . . . „ 154

A writing lesson is in progress. The chief monitor stands on the steps giving the words of command; the other monitors are at the end of the desks receiving slates for correction. The children in the front row are sitting at a "sand desk."

The General Post Office. (*National Gallery, Dublin*) . . . . . „ 185

Showing mail-coaches arriving and departing, and also the more primitive form of the Irish side-car.

Beggar's Badge. (*Royal Irish Academy Collection, National Museum*) . . . . .

Issued in 1801 by authorities of St. Patrick's Parish, Dublin, to deserving poor of vicinity. Its possession was equivalent to a local licence to beg.

United Irishman's Medal. (*State Paper Office*) „ 198

Seized in Co. Antrim Feb. 1797, in house of John M'Bride, whose name is engraved on medal. Legend "Irishmen, unite, tear of [off] your chains and be free," also harp, pike, musket, &c.

Sir Robert Peel . . . . . „ 211

From an engraving by S. Cousins after a painting by Sir Thos. Lawrence, by permission of the publishers, Messrs. P. & D. Colnaghi & Co.

Letter of Lord Nelson to Lord Sligo. (*State Paper Office*) . . . . . „ 251

This letter well illustrates the confident, self-reliant spirit that animated Nelson and the navy, and also, to a very large extent, the merchant services during the Great War.

Passenger Canal Boat at Harcourt Lock, Grand Canal. (*National Gallery, Dublin*) . „ 273

IRELAND FROM THE UNION TO CATHOLIC EMANCIPATION

INTRODUCTION

OUTLINE OF POLITICAL HISTORY, 1800–1829

Irish history is full of instances of the right thing being done at the wrong time or in the wrong way. Perhaps the Union with Great Britain is the most remarkable instance of the latter type of political blunder. The statesmen in charge of the measure, having once made up their minds that a union was necessary, determined to stick at nothing to achieve their purpose. The end was held to justify the means. The result was that the Union left, so to speak, an unpleasant taste in the mouths of every one connected with it. The circumstances are well known and need not be dilated on here. The seeds of future discontent were sown almost from the start. Although many of the politicians who had resisted the Union acquiesced in it subsequently, and even accepted office under later administrations, yet the great mass of the Irish

people seem to have felt that they had been tricked and trapped into an abandonment of their privileges. Moreover, in at least one important particular, the promises made during the preliminary negotiations had not been fulfilled. Pitt had gained a considerable amount of Catholic support by undertaking to introduce a measure to relieve persons of that religion from the numerous disabilities, parliamentary and other, under which they still laboured. The Irish Parliament had in 1793 struck off some of the fetters which the Penal Laws had piled upon the "Papist," but he was still far from being on an equality with the Protestant. The Catholics had hoped that it would be easier to obtain justice from the Imperial Parliament than from their own. It was pointed out at the time that Westminster could afford to be more generous than College Green. If, for instance, the bar on the election of Catholics to Parliament were removed without a Union taking place, the Irish assembly might be swamped with Catholic members, and the Protestants, who had so long been in the ascendant, would find themselves at once under the heels of those whom they had persecuted. In the Imperial Parliament, on the other hand, the Catholics could never be more than a minority, and their rise to political power could not be signalised by a display of vindictiveness towards their late opponents. If the Union with Great Britain were accompanied by a relief of the Catholics, one important section of the community,

at all events, would have a grateful recollection of that measure, and be predisposed to that "union of hearts" without which the union of the legislatures could not be a success.

But Pitt, who was probably quite sincere in his intentions, had reckoned without his monarch. George III. replied with an absolute *non possumus* to all overtures for Catholic Emancipation. The minister resigned at once, but was soon afterwards persuaded to return to office, giving a pledge not to introduce the subject again during the old king's lifetime. The Catholics felt they had been betrayed, and were not slow to show their resentment. From 1805 onwards their movement falls into less scrupulous hands, and their agitation is characterised by a continually increasing bitterness and fury.

However, the first few years of the century passed over quietly enough, the only exception to the general tranquillity being the curiously isolated rebellion of Robert Emmet in 1803. After the passing of the Union, the chief contrivers of that measure, the Viceroy Cornwallis and the Chief Secretary Castlereagh, disappeared from the Irish scene. The vacant Lord Lieutenancy was filled by the appointment of Lord Hardwicke, a conciliatory and tactful person, who might be relied on to smooth over the frictions incidental to a transition period. The fierce old lion of the ultra-Protestant party, the Chancellor Lord Clare, died in 1802, and was succeeded by Lord Redesdale, a man of much

less arbitrary and aggressive disposition. Chief Secretaries came and went at short intervals, and, as usually happens in such circumstances, power fell into the hands of the Permanent Under Secretary, Alexander Marsden, an energetic and unprejudiced official. On the whole, then, matters were going smoothly when the sudden insurrection of Emmet took every one by surprise.

This young man was one of those attractive and lovable, yet quite romantic and unpractical, characters who figure so frequently in Irish revolutionary movements, and so often come to a miserable end. He had been expelled from Trinity College in 1798 as being implicated in treasonable practices. His elder brother, indeed, had taken a leading part in the conspiracy of the United Irishmen, had been imprisoned for some time, and was only released eventually on condition of going into voluntary exile. But the plans of Robert Emmet were different from those of his predecessors. They had aimed at rousing and organising the whole country, while his design was to seize the capital by a *coup de main*. It was a bold and daring scheme, and, owing to the unpreparedness of the authorities, had at least a fair chance of success. Arms were collected and stored in various parts of the city, and arrangements were made for obtaining assistance from some survivors of the previous rebellion, who were still maintaining a precarious existence in the hills of Wicklow. Another contingent was to

come from Kildare, a county which had furnished many adherents to the United Irishmen during 1798. Emmet seems to have had hopes of French assistance. The 23rd of July was fixed for the rising, and attacks were to be made simultaneously on Dublin Castle, the seat of Government, and the Pigeonhouse Fort, which commands the harbour. However the plan completely miscarried. One country contingent failed to appear; the other arrived in Dublin, but could not get into touch with Emmet and his followers. That leader himself, dressed in an elaborate green uniform, sallied out with a mere handful of men to storm the castle. He soon lost all control over his men, who proceeded to riot and outrage. The Chief Justice, Lord Kilwarden, and his nephew, who were so unfortunate as to fall into their hands, were dragged out from the carriage, in which they were seated, and piked to death in the street. The uproar soon attracted the attention of the nearest guard-house, and a few volleys disposed of this ill-starred insurrection. Emmet escaped at the time but was subsequently arrested, owing, it is said, to his lingering too long near Dublin in his desire to take leave of his betrothed. His execution after such a career was inevitable, and on the 20th of September 1803 he was publicly hanged in Thomas Street. The only result of his rising was to draw down on the authorities at Dublin Castle a severe censure for their failure to obtain information of, and take

precautions against, the intended rising. For a time the fears of a widespread conspiracy such as that of 1797 and 1798 were revived, but anxiety on this head soon disappeared.

Two years later the agitation of the Roman Catholics began to show signs of life. New influences were at work in that communion. The movement for emancipation had long been led by representatives of the old aristocracy; it now began to take a more democratic turn.

Although there was a strong middle-class element in the Catholic Committees, mainly consisting of Dublin traders and professional men, yet the peers and country gentry had exercised a predominant influence. Such men were naturally conservative in their methods, anxious to free their religion from its bondage, yet unwilling to incur the imputation of disloyalty by hampering and besetting the Government at a time of national crisis. A petition was drawn up and presented in 1805, but received such scanty encouragement from Pitt that it had little or no effect on the tone of English thought on the subject. This rebuff seems to have led to the displacement of the old Catholic leaders. It was felt that, in view of the hostility or indifference of Parliament in general, stronger measures than mere speeches and petitions were needed. There was at hand a man admirably fitted for such a crusade as was now commenced, and by the inevitable logic of events he soon attained complete control of the movement.

Daniel O'Connell, then just coming to the front at the Irish bar, was still comparatively a young man. He was possessed of a keen, alert, and capacious intellect, a great power of industry, and, on the whole, a pleasant and attractive personal disposition. His eloquence was unrivalled in its power and versatility. No man understood better than he the complexities of the Irish character, and none perhaps, before or since, has been so successful in bending the wayward Celt to follow the dictates of a stronger mind and will. He was ardently devoted to his own form of religious belief, and loved his country with an intensity almost as passionate. He was not without faults of character, most notable of which was a certain tendency to vulgarity and scurrility. But on the whole he was an excellent instrument for the purposes of the Catholics. He was, if the comparison is not strained, the great battering-ram which broke down the walls of prejudice and bigotry both in England and Ireland. It is not easy for us, who live in a more enlightened time, to realise how strong these were.

Irish Protestantism, from its close contact with, and secret fears of Catholicism, was naturally vehement and determined in its resistance to any measure for the elevation of that religion. Many Protestants undoubtedly feared that their lives would pay the penalty if the Roman Catholics attained to any power, and though their alarms were unnecessary, the murders and massacres of 1798 afforded some

excuse for their belief. Considerations such as these undoubtedly brought about the conversion of Ulster from a rebellious, free-thinking, and liberal-minded province to a home of passionate loyalty and frenzied Protestantism. The horrors of Scullabogue and Wexford Bridge seem to have turned the North completely away from any desire to co-operate with or assist the Catholics. Thus "the evil that men do lives after them." In England too, with less excuse, there were similar feelings at work. The cry of "No Popery" was frequently raised, and proved most effective. "Equality of the Roman Catholics," writes one man, who may be taken as typical of the official and governing classes, "would demolish the corner stone of the Constitution."[1] And even where there was no hostility there was indifference or timidity. Where Pitt had failed, no other statesman cared to hazard his power or popularity. "Keep yourself out of the Catholic business," Lord Sligo writes to Marsden, speaking of it as a thing certain to have an ill effect on the fortunes of any one who took it up.[2] O'Connell set himself to make Catholic Emancipation an urgent and burning question, so that it could neither be voted down by one class nor quietly shelved by the other, and although the struggle took more than twenty years of his life, he was successful in the end.

[1] Letter of C. W. Flint, May 16, 1805. He was for many years Permanent Secretary in the Irish Office, London.

[2] Letter of January 24, 1805.

The means adopted at first were public discussion and petition. Although O'Connell himself, being a Catholic, could not sit in the House of Commons, his cause had powerful supporters there. The appeals of such men as Grattan and Plunket were not ineffective in educating the House of Commons on the subject. As the years went by, although Cabinets were still divided on the subject, the majority against bills for the relief of Catholics gradually diminished. But the Lords remained as obdurate as ever, and there seemed little chance of any measure passing into law. Meantime O'Connell was busy in Dublin addressing Catholic meetings, attacking the abuses of Irish government and administration whenever an opportunity occurred, defending his co-religionists in the courts against oppression or injustice—in fact, conducting a popular agitation of the type rendered so familiar by its frequent imitation in later times. The Government was decidedly annoyed by these tactics, and endeavoured to retaliate by suppressing the assemblies of Catholic delegates on the ground that they were breaches of the Convention Act of 1793, which forbade the establishment of any quasi-representative bodies for political action or discussion. The Irish Parliament, which could brook no rivals, had adopted this measure to strike at an opposition Catholic assembly, known to history by the nickname of the "Back-Lane Parliament." The Act was now used against O'Connell, but proved quite ineffective; for

his legal skill, which, as he boasted, was always capable of "driving a coach-and-four through any Act of Parliament," was quite equal to the task of observing the letter while infringing the spirit of the law on this point. If one association was suppressed, another with a new title and a new set of rules soon took its place.

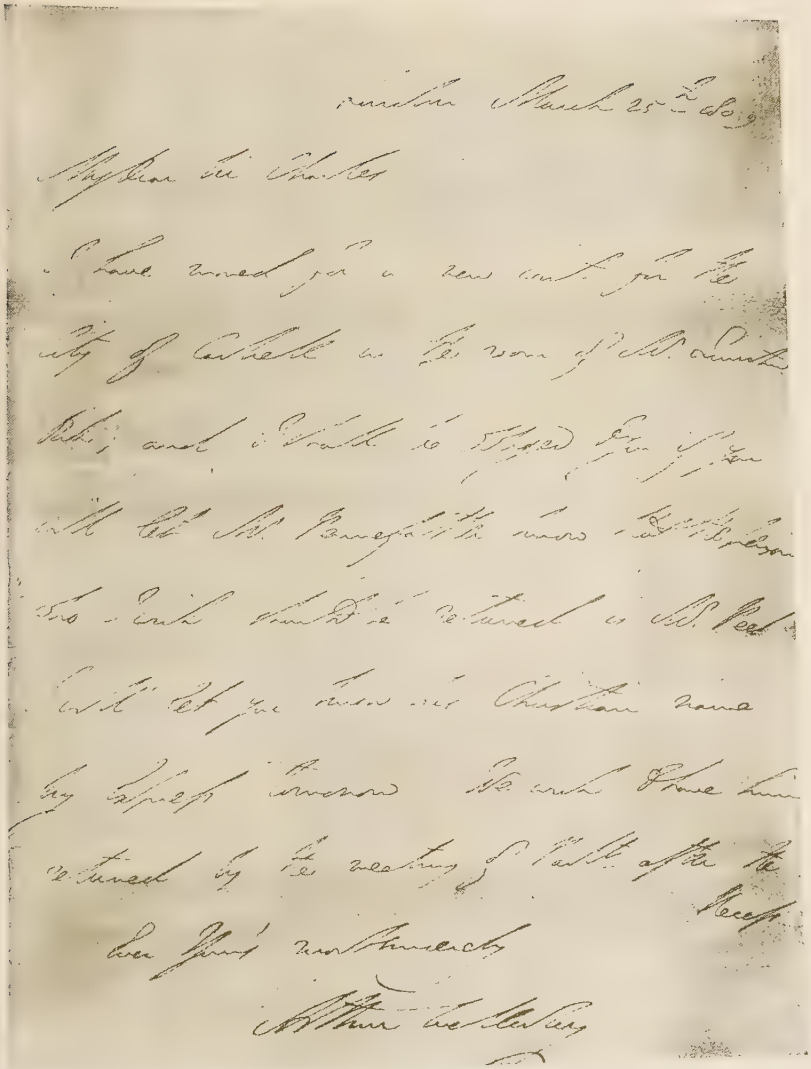
However, dissensions sprang up in the Catholic ranks, rendering all their efforts nugatory for a time. The British Government was anxious, if it conceded Catholic Emancipation, to obtain some tangible concession in return. It desired, in short, to obtain some sort of control over the Roman Catholic Church, similar to that which it exercised over the Establishment and the Presbyterians. This could best be secured by means of a State veto on the appointment of bishops or a State endowment of the priesthood. The Irish bishops previous to the Union had agreed to accept both conditions as a necessary part of Emancipation; but, perhaps fortunately for their own popularity, Pitt's failure to fulfil his share of the bargain relieved them of any obligation in that quarter. The Papacy, too, although it rejected the idea of a State provision for the clergy, was not disinclined to assent to the veto. Under these circumstances the veto was embodied in a Catholic Relief Bill introduced by Grattan in 1813, but, much to the surprise and chagrin not only of the proposer but also of the moderate aristocratic Catholics, O'Connell initiated a determined resist-

ance to governmental control in any shape or form. At first he stood almost alone, but eventually he drew over to his side practically all the clergy and a good part of the laity, and though the movement was completely wrecked for the time, he gained his point in the end. Herein he showed greater prescience than most of his contemporaries. A Roman Catholic Church which was much under State influence would probably be suspected and discredited sooner or later. Its natural conservative influence, which has often in the nineteenth century arrested the progress of revolutionary or socialistic movements, would have been ascribed on each occasion of its exercise to secret and sinister intrigues between the Government and the bishops. But at the moment the policy of rejecting the veto brought disaster. The Catholic Board was the scene of angry recriminations and eventually became so weak and divided that, when it was suppressed in 1814, even O'Connell was unable to fill its place with a successor of the same kind. For the next nine years the Catholic attitude was marked by despondency and apathy. O'Connell himself was almost inclined to abandon the campaign altogether and to devote himself to procuring Parliamentary Reform or the Repeal of the Union.

Peel, who was Chief Secretary from 1812 to 1818, was but little troubled by Irish politics during his long term of office, and was free to attend to those administrative problems in which he took

such a pleasure, and which he handled so brilliantly. In a number of ways, his foundation of the special police and magistracy being perhaps the most salient instance, he strengthened the organisation of law and order in Ireland. His influence, as will be shown hereafter, was felt in almost every department. Nothing was too tedious for his patient industry, and nothing too complicated for his comprehension. It is no exaggeration to say that the present bureaucratic system in Ireland owes its first beginnings to Peel. But while he was a reformer in departmental matters, he showed himself a rigid Conservative in all that lay outside his official sphere. He was also a determined and an able opponent of the Catholic claims, and used coercion without stint or scruple against their chief exponents. O'Connell, who hated him profoundly, nicknamed him "Orange" Peel, and once said of him that "his smile was like the silver plate on a coffin."

The visit of George the Fourth to Ireland in 1821 was hailed by many as an omen of a more conciliatory régime. The Catholic bishops were received in state, and O'Connell was prominent in the enthusiastic popular welcome which that undeserving monarch received. At the same time, the important offices of the Lord Lieutenant and Attorney-General were filled by supporters of the Catholic claims in the persons of Lord Wellesley and Plunket. But these concessions were to a large extent nullified by the appointment of Goulburn, a



LETTER OF SIR A. WELLESLEY DIRECTING THE NOMINATION OF ROBERT PEEL FOR THE BOROUGH OF CASHEL

vigorous partisan of the other side, to the Chief Secretaryship. The experiment of placing a divided administration over a discontented country failed to justify its trial. Wellesley irritated the Orangemen beyond all bounds by his attitude towards their celebrations, and even had a bottle thrown at his head during the course of a State visit to a Dublin theatre. Goulburn applied coercion steadily and relentlessly, and poor Plunket, ill at ease in his office, incurred much odium by some State prosecutions which he had ordered. In 1821 and 1822 the country fell into a disturbed condition, not so much, it appears, from grievances relating to religion or politics, as from the usual agrarian troubles, aggravated in this case by bad harvests and consequent scarcity of food. Outrages occurred daily, and their repression was a task which taxed the utmost resources of Government, even though its efforts were to some extent assisted by O'Connell, who had throughout his career an absolute horror of mob violence, probably the result of his early experiences in revolutionary France.

However he seems at this juncture to have resolved on a much more daring and aggressive policy for the attainment of the great aim of his life, Catholic Emancipation. It was, in a word, to build up an organisation that, while avowedly peaceful and constitutional, might yet be so strong in its numbers, discipline, and unanimity as to convey an unmistakable menace to an obstinate government.

Such was the famous Catholic Association, which afterwards gained so great a hold on the Irish people. It was established in 1823 and was guided by O'Connell with a dexterity and resourcefulness which were truly remarkable. Its objects were to prepare petitions and collect information as to Catholic grievances. It was unrestricted as to membership. Any person, no matter what his creed, could become a member on paying his subscription. Its meetings were open to the public. After it had been a few months in existence, O'Connell decided to start a campaign fund, based on contributions from the whole of Ireland. It was enjoined as a duty on all Irish Catholics that they should contribute a penny a month, or more according to their means, to the war-chest of the Association. The priests threw themselves whole-heartedly into the collection of this tribute, sometimes using methods which were not far short of intimidation. Enormous sums were raised in this way, and naturally the body, which could order and enforce a national levy of this kind, soon enjoyed an extraordinary prestige. The Government sought for opportunities of invoking the law against it, but none were vouchsafed. The Association was soon to show its strength in an unexpected quarter.

Strange as it may seem, every Irish election saw hundreds of thousands of Irish Catholic electors voting directly against their own personal sympathies, which were, of course, with O'Connell and his party.

This they had done out of obedience to their landlords, who were usually on the opposite side. There was at the time a low qualification for the franchise; the country gentry, in their desire for political influence, had deliberately multiplied the numbers of the "forty-shilling freeholders," as they were called, thinking they could rely absolutely on their subservience. In those days of open voting and unrestrained landlord authority, few tenants dared bring down on them the powerful hostility that opposition to the landlord's candidate would surely provoke. So the tenants voted as they were bid, and concealed their real sentiments. In every rural constituency there was a sufficient number of the "forty-shilling freeholders" to turn the scale if they could be induced to act boldly and with one accord. The Catholic Association broke the spell which had so long lain over the electorate. In 1826 it carried several county seats, notably those of Waterford and Louth, in the very teeth of the great landed interests. No efforts were spared on either side. It was, as was remarked at the time, "a contest between the distress warrant and the cross." The Church pitted itself against the landlords, and won a great triumph. From this time onward the victory of Emancipation was only a matter of time. What had been achieved in Waterford could be repeated all over the country.

O'Connell forced matters to a conclusion by offering himself as a candidate for County Clare,

despite the law that debarred Catholics from sitting in Parliament. Hitherto Protestant Emancipationists had been elected by the votes controlled by the Association; it would be a step further if a Catholic were returned, and the Imperial Parliament were challenged to disfranchise a constituency because of the religious views of its electors. The result was not long in doubt. The Catholic voters poured into Ennis, headed by their priests, and marched, with all the order and discipline of a great army, to the hustings to record their votes. O'Connell was returned by a large majority, his opponent retiring in despair before the close of the poll.

The decision of this awkward situation lay with Peel and Wellington, now in control of British policy as Home Secretary and Prime Minister. Both were opposed to Emancipation, but, being clear-sighted men, they could not fail to see the dangers of further resistance. An ugly temper was rising in Ireland, and there was no saying when this great organisation, with its vast numbers and its perfect discipline, might be turned to treasonable purposes. Many in Ireland were only waiting, as they said, "for the Counsellor [O'Connell] to give the word." Ulster was secretly arming in self-defence, and serious collisions between the two parties were anticipated. At Ballybay in County Monaghan, a conflict between bodies of Orangemen and Catholics, numbering several thousands on each

side, was only averted by a personal appeal from the general commanding the district. Under these circumstances Peel and the Duke decided to yield the point at issue, in order to avoid, as they said, the greater evils of civil war and rebellion. A fairly full and complete Emancipation Bill was introduced in March 1829 and rapidly passed through all its stages. With a few exceptions, every office under the Crown was thrown open to Catholics. The concession was not accompanied by any provisions for veto or State endowment. So far it was an unqualified surrender. But, on the other hand, the forty-shilling freeholders were disfranchised, and O'Connell was obliged to seek re-election, while Catholic priests and monks were subjected to a number of annoying regulations as to registering their names and the like. Still, on the whole, it was a great victory for O'Connell, and a fine climax to a long and arduous struggle.

Unfortunately, however, the circumstances of this notable triumph were not such as to form a good precedent for subsequent Irish action. Britain, deaf to entreaties and claims based on justice, had yielded at last, as in 1782, to a palpable menace. Irish Nationalists have not failed to draw the obvious conclusion, and have acted on it frequently. The rebellious spirit, which might with tactful handling have died out in Ireland after 1798, was fostered and kept alive by thirty years of fierce political contention. Ireland was set against England

and Anglo-Ireland, Protestant against Roman Catholic, the lower classes against the upper. The spirit of antagonism still survives and still works many evils. And though, no doubt, the bitterness is slowly dying out, there are, as yet, few signs of the appearance of complete reconciliation, whether between warring parties in Ireland or between the two nations that face each other across the Irish Sea.

CHAPTER I

TRADE, COMMERCE, AND MANUFACTURE

It is not easy to give an adequate description of the state of Ireland, regarded from the industrial standpoint, at the opening of the nineteenth century. There is an abundance of material for the purpose, but it is so scattered and heterogeneous in its nature that those who make use of it have continually to be on their guard lest they may be over-emphasising one point and neglecting another. For example, owing to the existence of import and export statistics, it is much easier to form accurate conclusions as to the character and extent of Irish external trade than of Irish internal commerce. Yet the important factor of home production for home consumption must be fully taken into account, however difficult it may be to trace its workings. High freights and heavy customs dues militated very much against external trade in those days and kept the home market for the native producer. There were in Ireland several successful industries whose output was consumed in the country, and cannot therefore be estimated by a reference to imports

or exports.[1] The subject accordingly falls into two sections, the internal and external trade, and it will be well to deal with each separately, taking the external first, as it yields better data to the investigator, and often throws light incidentally on the other section.

The Union with Great Britain seems to have produced a remarkable series of changes in the Irish industrial world. In the first place, the demolition of nearly all the existing tariff barriers led immediately to an increased intercourse between the two countries. At the same time, the improvements in British and Irish trade routes facilitated the mutual interchange of products. The result was seen in a steady and progressive increase in the total volume of Irish imports and exports. Between 1800 and 1826 the average annual value of Irish exports increased from £4,000,000 to £8,000,000, and a similar increase was recorded in imports.[2] Concurrently with this addition to the total volume of trade there was a gradual change in its character. It is a maxim of political economy that where exchange of commodities is free and unrestricted, each producer will tend more and more to devote himself to those branches of industry for which he

[1] For instance, Ireland in 1800 fed and clothed its own population, whereas now she is largely dependent on other countries in both respects.

[2] This tendency has continued to operate throughout the century. The exports are now valued at £50,000,000, more than twelve times their value in 1800.

has the greatest relative advantage. Now, regarding Ireland in its productive capacity as a single whole, its relative advantage undoubtedly lay in the pursuit of agriculture and the supplying of provisions. In manufactures, on the other hand, especially those of a highly organised nature, the relative advantage lay rather with Great Britain, particularly in view of the much more rapid introduction of labour-saving machinery in that country. Under the stress of British competition, even in the home market, Irish cotton and woollen manufactures gradually declined, and were by 1829 not far from extinction. The Ulster linen industry was only just saved in time by the adoption of power spinning and weaving. To use an expressive modernism, Ireland was beginning to find it profitable to "specialise" in raising agricultural produce, partly for the maintenance of its own people and partly for the British market.

This specialising system, it may be remarked, has persisted down to the present day, but, nevertheless, the agricultural economy of Ireland in the early nineteenth century differed in several important respects from that of to-day. There was much more tillage then than now. Pasturage and dairy-farming, though very prominent, did not occupy almost the whole field as they do now. The great war, the Irish bounty system, and the heavy duties on corn imported into Great Britain from foreign countries seem to have given a decided stimulus to corn-

growing in Ireland. Owing to the French control of the Continent and the prevalence of privateers around the coast, the usual sources of supply were, for the most part, closed to the British consumer. The United Kingdom was thrown back on its own food resources, and Ireland seems to have supplied the deficiencies of the sister isle, which even then did not grow sufficient corn to feed itself. All through the period of this volume the export of wheat and wheat flour, oats and oatmeal to England continues to increase. For the triennial period 1797–1800 the average yearly export was 276,000 quarters; for that from 1827 to 1830 it reached the enormous total of 2,200,000 quarters. Even when the great war was over, the heavy duties on imported corn excluded the foreign product from British markets almost as effectually as if the seas had still been infested with predatory craft. Ireland, for the first time perhaps in her history, had turned to tillage on a large scale. The great corn-growing counties were Kildare, Carlow, Kilkenny, Queen's County, Tipperary and Limerick, and these produced such a quantity of grain that it was possible without palpable exaggeration to describe them as "the granary of England."[1]

Apart from the prominence of corn in the returns, Irish external trade presents its usual features. Animals and animal products figure very largely.

[1] This phrase occurs in a memorandum of 1812 on the possible improvement of inland navigation.

There is as yet little or no movement of live cattle. Indeed, except for districts close to the sea, this was out of the question, for cattle could not be driven many miles to or from a port without suffering great deterioration; and again, the ships of that day were not adapted to carrying beasts. The railway and the steamer are the great factors in the modern live cattle trade. But if the ox and the pig did not go out "on the hoof," they were exported in another form, being salted down and sent out in barrels to the amount of about 400,000 cwt. of salt beef and pork and about 180,000 cwt. of bacon annually. As steamers came more and more into general use,[1] the trade in preserved meat gradually dwindled away, and was replaced by that in live cattle. Irish bacon, however, which is a far more palatable article of diet than the tough and flavourless "salt horse" so much objurgated by Nelson's seamen (if we may believe the naval novelist), continued to hold its own and to increase in popular favour. By the year 1826, the last for which the figures for Irish external trade are available in any degree of completeness,[2] the average annual export of bacon and ham had reached 338,000 cwts.

Another great animal product—namely, butter—was also largely dealt in. In this case the average annual export goes up from 215,000 cwts. at the

[1] The first steam packet from Dublin Harbour sailed in 1816.

[2] Owing to the assimilation of the British and Irish customs, no general record was kept of the cross-channel trade after that date.

commencement of the century to 441,000 cwts. towards the close of the third decade. Irish butter commanded a good price, £5 to £6 per cwt., or about a shilling a pound. It was sent not only to Great Britain, but to foreign countries, notably to Portugal, which took from the port of Cork alone some 50,000 casks per annum.[1] Another rising trade was that in spirits.

Whisky, which is a beverage "truly racy of the soil," with a history that can be traced back to at least the reign of Henry VIII, had throughout the eighteenth century been largely drunk in Ireland by the poorer classes and the peasantry. The gentry preferred wine, and the middle classes seem to have been partial to rum. But the manufacture of whisky was as yet a very simple process and seems to have formed a part of the ordinary housewifery of the day, as the making of "wines" from cowslips and rhubarb is to this day in rural England. However, unfortunately, the fiery spirit was not so innocuous in its effects as the vegetable decoctions just mentioned. The authorities, seeking an object of taxation, fastened on this increasingly popular and, as they thought, extremely deleterious intoxicant and imposed heavy duties and exacting excise regulations. Accordingly in the towns, at all events, distilling ceased to be a household practice, and was conducted in large establishments. But in the country districts the law

[1] Letter of S. M'Call, Nov. 26, 1795.

could not be so readily enforced. The result was a great prevalence of illicit distilling, which for long defied all attempts to suppress it, and indeed will probably never be wholly extinct. The licit distillers were much hampered by the unfair competition of these "potheen" makers, and by the perpetual interference of the Government in the corn trade whenever a scarcity of provision was feared. For instance, there was a statute in force which provided automatically for the prohibition of export whenever the price of corn reached a certain level. Or again, when a famine was thought to be imminent, malting and distilling from corn were interdicted altogether for a time, to the great loss and inconvenience of those who had capital invested in the industry. For these reasons the returns vary very considerably from one year to another, but it may be accepted that on an average 4,000,000 gallons of spirits were produced in the various distilleries, mostly for home consumption, and that about 300,000 gallons were exported.

On the other hand, breweries, which were considered to provide a wholesome alternative to the drinking of spirits, were encouraged and favoured in every way.[1] The close of the eighteenth century saw the foundation and the rise to prosperity of many

[1] Grattan once told the brewers that he considered their industry "the natural nurse of the people, entitled to every encouragement, favour, and exemption." At their source, he said, the Irish Parliament would find in its own country "the means of health with all its flourishing consequences, and the cure of intoxication with

well-known Irish breweries, among others that of Messrs. Guinness. The people seem to have taken kindly to the less alcoholic and healthier beverage. The old Cork firm of Beamish & Crawford is said to have brewed one hundred thousand barrels a year.

Coming to manufactures proper, the only one, as has been said, of any note was the making of linen. This, too, was largely a domestic industry and was chiefly confined to the north of Ireland. The weavers worked in their own cottages, for the most part, and sold their products in the markets of the nearest town, often eking out their receipts by practising a little subsistence farming. The possession of a "potato garden," from which the family might at a pinch be supported, was a useful help when times were bad, as they so often were, in the linen trade.[1] Nevertheless a very considerable produce was kept up; the export figure to Great Britain averaged 40,000,000 yards annually, and to foreign countries 3,000,000. The industry was peculiarly cherished by the Govern-

all its misery." At the date of this utterance tea and coffee were not within the reach of the poor, and beer was considered a "temperance" drink.

[1] These fluctuations were probably due to over-production, an evil to which domestic industries are naturally prone. Small producers, toiling for a mere subsistence, cannot foresee the probable limitations of demand in the future so well as the capitalist employer can, and, even supposing them to possess the necessary foresight, they would probably be unwilling or unable to restrain their output. When "bad times" came, the linen weavers, if they had not enough potatoes or oatmeal to live on, enlisted or went to America.

ment, which sent a special convoy thrice a year to escort the linen ships from Ireland to the chief British ports in time for the great markets.[1]

Also there was a special department, called the Linen Board, consisting of trustees appointed by the Government to watch over the welfare of this important trade. Its efforts seem to have been mainly directed to the giving of premiums for good work, the donation or loan of implements of manufacture, and the checking of malpractices. From the data at our disposal it is not easy to sum up the results of its work. Its actions were often very sharply criticised at the time. Probably it suffered from the usual failings which mark the operations of State departments whenever they seek to stimulate and direct the natural flow of commerce. Its members, most of whom were peers or country gentlemen, seldom possessed any knowledge of the linen industry. Very few of them had even any general business training or experience. Consequently the Board's interference sometimes caused as much harm as good,[2] and even the advantages it secured were hardly proportionate to the sum it cost the public. Its expenditure was lavish, over £20,000 a year, most of which, as usual in such cases, was devoted to paying a host of minor officials.[3] When in the early decades of the nine-

[1] Letter of J. Corry, with enclosure from Linen Board, May 17, 1795. The provision trade enjoyed a similar privilege.

[2] An instance is given on p. 37 (note).

[3] Accounts of Linen Board, 1813.

teenth century "economy" became a watchword at Dublin Castle, a jealous eye was turned on this expensive department. In a letter to Wickham of the year 1802, Lord Hardwicke, then viceroy, declared that any legislation in connection with the Linen Board should be closely scrutinised, as "the manufacture is no longer in its infancy, and is not thought to require so magnificent an auxiliary at the public expense."[1] However, the Board was not abolished until 1827.

Though, as must inevitably be the case, by far the greater part of the trade was with Great Britain, Ireland had also a foreign trade of her own on a small scale, chiefly to the United States, Portugal, and the West Indies.[2] In these instances she exported, as a rule, her salt provisions, receiving in return the staple article of the foreign country, as, for example, American tobacco and West Indian sugar.

The import trade of Ireland followed much the same lines as at present, except that a hundred years ago no foreign foodstuffs, except, of course, such tropical products as sugar or tea, were brought into the country. Ireland was more self-supporting then than now. She fed herself (on potatoes, it is true) and was able to provision her neighbour. Now she

[1] Letter to W. Wickham, Chief Secretary, March 20, 1802.

[2] A return of 26th March 1809 contains information as to ships entered at Irish ports to and from various countries in 1808–1809.

devotes all her energies to supplying that neighbour with animal food, and is content to rely on America for the corn and flour which are made into her own daily bread.[1]

The chief articles imported were barilla, pearl-ash, &c. (for the linen manufacture), coals, drapery, flax seed, hardware, iron, salt (for curing purposes), spirits (gin, brandy, rum, &c.), sugar, tea, tobacco, and wine.

Apart from manufactured goods, most of which she imported from Great Britain, the country was largely self-sufficing, even in the matter of fuel. The imports of coal, however, were on the upward grade, and increased from an average of 360,000 tons at the beginning of the period to nearly 800,000 tons at the end. Irish coal seems to have been a good deal more utilised than it is at present. There are in the records several references to mines now apparently unworked. From one of these at Newtown, near Stradbally, in Queen's County, the Grand Canal Company raised and sold in the first half of the year 1817 over eleven thousand tons, at an average price of £1 per ton.[2] The mines of Killenaule in Tipperary seem to have supplied the whole of the surrounding neighbourhood, seeing that the local magistrates thought it desirable to issue special passes for coal-carriers during a period of disturb-

[1] According to recent returns, 7,000,000 cwts. of wheat and 5,000,000 cwts. of flour are annually imported into Ireland.

[2] Grand Canal Company's accounts, 1816–1817.

ance.[1] Again, at Slane, a coal mine was being worked.[2] At Shalee, not far from Limerick, there were silver and lead in workable quantities,[3] while one of the Puxley family, so well known in West Cork, was finding it to his advantage to develop the copper mine at Allihies.[4] For several years a gold mine was being worked in Co. Wicklow. In 1796 the peasants living near the foot of Croghan Kinshela, not far from Arklow, began to find small nuggets in the beds of streams in that vicinity. Naturally there was a rush to the auriferous district, and the Government, fearing the consequences to the public peace of a sudden enriching of the poorer class, especially in a county which was fast drifting into rebellion, determined to take over the mines themselves and work them for the public benefit. The operations, interrupted for a while by the insurrection of 1798, were resumed later; but the nuggets suddenly came to an end, and though the experts of the day tried every means at their disposal to locate the vanished line of gold-bearing deposit, they were unable to do so, and the mines, after being worked at a loss for a couple of years, were eventually abandoned.

Now it seems likely that, with the plentiful experience of alluvial gold afforded by California and Australia, the mining engineers of the present day

[1] Letter of Sir V. Hunt, Oct. 13, 1814.
[2] Letter of Slane Coal Mine Company, 1801.
[3] Letter and pamphlet of E. W. Newenham, April 14, 1815.
[4] Letter of J. L. Puxley, Oct. 31, 1820.

might discover the mysterious mountain treasury from whence the gold of Croghan Kinshela was carried by the upland torrents and deposited in the river-beds where it was found.

The internal trade of Ireland seems to have been confined to the production of the primary and immediate necessities of human life, food and drink, shelter, clothing, household furniture, and the simpler kind of tool and implement. A considerable number of people were employed in various industries connected with the preparation of food for human consumption, as, for instance, in grinding corn and in curing meat and fish. Mills were more numerous towards the north, that being an oatmeal country, and the curing factories were to be found in the southern ports adjacent to the great cattle-raising districts. And, as eating naturally implies drinking, the two thriving industries of brewing and distilling may be mentioned here. Although there was an export trade in spirits, there was little or none in beer, that commodity being too bulky in proportion to its value to be worth paying freightage on for a long journey. Neither breweries nor distilleries were centralised, as they are perhaps tending to be at present. Every town of any size supported its own establishment.

Industries connected with clothing were beginning to decay, being probably affected by the introduction of machinery. The large factories of Lancashire and Yorkshire began to be able to turn out cheaper

goods than the small cottage looms of Ireland. As the Union involved eventually the abolition of protective duties between the two countries, these cheap fabrics found ready access to the Irish market, and there undersold the wares of the native producer, who, either from lack of enterprise or want of capital, was rarely willing to spend much money on buying machinery. The linen industry of the north was saved in time by the adoption of modern methods, but the other textile trades suffered severely, the cotton manufacture disappearing altogether, and the woollen, though never wholly extinguished, being reduced to the mere shadow of its former proportions.

The seat of this little-known cotton industry was Belfast, although there were several large factories in Leinster. It had been introduced originally, according to Wakefield, in the Belfast poorhouse, and had spread to the neighbouring country. Machinery was a good deal utilised, and the production was on a large scale, some factories employing as many as four hundred hands. At the time of the Union the industry was in a fairly promising condition, and, in order to spare it for a while from British competition, the Irish import duties on cottons were allowed to remain in force for some years subsequently. However, it failed eventually, probably because it was unable to attain sufficient strength during the period of immunity to enable it to hold its ground against Lancashire.

The woollen manufacture had long been in a state of depression, owing, in all likelihood, to the same cause, the competition of goods made by labour-saving machinery.[1] It was a scattered trade; the manufacturers, being usually poor men, distant from and unknown to each other, lacked the stimulus of direct contact with persons engaged in similar pursuits. If they had been localised in one neighbourhood, they might have made some united effort to save themselves, but, as it was, they seem to have perished one by one.

Again and again both they and the cotton manufacturers are to be found applying to Government for loans to tide them over their difficulties. The State was more disposed then than it would be now to listen to such a request, its line of reasoning being that a loan to the employer would enable him to keep his works still going, and so save his workmen from discharge and all the evils of unemployment. Parliament gave liberal grants for this purpose, which were administered by a Distressed Manufacturers' Relief Committee.[2]

The building trade was not so extensive in

[1] It should also be mentioned that the Irish woollen industry, once very prosperous, had, in the early and middle eighteenth century, been the victim of hostile legislation. Even though the commercial restrictions were swept away in 1782, the trade does not seem to have had strength enough to recover its old position.

[2] In seasons of distress the Dublin weavers used to march from the Liberty to the Castle to lay their state before the Lord Lieutenant. As an indication of its purpose, the procession was usually preceded by a black fleece carried on a pole.

Ireland as in other countries, owing to the poor standard of accommodation of the people in this respect. A mud cabin, as will be shown later, required no very great skill or labour in its construction. Often it was built by men who had no professional knowledge of building. Similarly, too, except in the cities, there was little demand for elaborate furniture, but whatever was needed in this way was made locally. The same applies to cars, carts, and coaches, to all kinds of agricultural implements, and, to some extent, to boats and ships. Production in these directions was not yet specialised, and there was still a chance for the local man.

To sum up briefly the general economic tendencies of the period, it may be said that Ireland was developing new wants and new activities. Both as a producer and as a consumer she was moving along new lines. Long a self-sufficient country, she began to enter into the commerce of the United Kingdom. She marketed her goods instead of consuming them herself, and she began to develop, as individuals do under similar circumstances, a number of new tastes and desires. The changes profoundly affected the whole structure of Irish economic life. For example, the improvement of communication cut both ways. It brought Irish provisions to the British market, but it also flooded the Irish market with British manufactures, some of which were in direct competition with struggling

Irish industries. The prosperity of the provision trade coincided with the decay of the textiles. In the seaports, too, English coal began to take the place of the native fuel. On the other hand, in such cases as brewing and distilling it is possible to trace at this time the origin of successful modern industries. There was advance in some quarters and retrogression in others. On the whole, agriculture gained and manufacture declined. It is difficult to say whether the nation as a whole gained more than it lost. One cannot strike a balance of profit and loss for a State as for a trading firm. Still, it seems regrettable that Ireland failed to preserve or develop some staple industry, that might have saved her from a total reliance on so uncertain a support as agriculture.

From many statements made in the course of this chapter, it may be inferred that the governments of last century were very "grandmotherly" in their ideas of trade legislation. Undoubtedly their intentions were good. In every one of the myriad enactments dealing with trade may be seen a desire to benefit somebody, the State, the merchant, or the consumer. But statutes were heaped upon statutes, regulations upon regulations, in such bewildering multitude that they altogether failed of their object. There were bounties on this article, countervailing duties on that, exportation "drawbacks" or rebates on another. Even prices were sometimes regulated; for example, by the Assize of Bread the

price of that article was fixed on the basis of a complicated calculation of the market price of corn and flour. The trader was hampered to an extent simply inconceivable; often he gave up trying to comply with the law, which he evaded either by superior cunning or by bribing his way through the officials who beset him.

The most flagrant instance of this is, of course, the customs. Almost every possible commodity was liable to duty, imposed at varying rates and by various methods. Some of these imposts were so heavy as practically to crush out the traffic altogether. The State was at war and had need of money, but the finance ministers of the day went, in the hackneyed phrase, very near to "killing the goose that laid the golden eggs." Smuggling became a profitable, if a hazardous, adventure. The merchant was so bled and harassed at the regular ports that he began to wonder whether it would not be better to try his luck at some secluded cove, where there would be no tedious and expensive Custom House to pass through. The Irish Government kept a small army and navy on foot to check smuggling, but nevertheless it was carried on to such an extent as seriously to affect the revenue receipts and to call forth bitter complaints from the law-abiding "fair traders," who found it impossible, after paying duty, to compete in price with the smuggled goods often offered in the same market. It must be confessed that, though the protection of home

industry and the exclusion of the alien is a policy in many ways attractive, yet the study of such a system in actual working does not reveal a very admirable state of things.

Abuses and injustice seem to be inevitable; the fabric of a nation's trade is so complicated and intricate in its organism that, until we know much more than we do of what Sir William Petty calls its "political anatomy," we may do more harm than good by our well-intentioned efforts. During the first half of the nineteenth century a protective policy was in force, and the official records of the time are full of letters and memorials from merchants and manufacturers pointing out the ruinous effects in their own cases of this or that regulation. For example, when, in the interest of the corn supply, the Government discouraged the making of starch, there went up a protest from the linen trade, to which starch was an essential.[1] Again, the embargoes so frequent during war time must have caused incalculable injury to Irish trade.

Whenever a war was imminent, it was usual, some weeks before hostilities broke out, to forbid the sailing of any ships, especially those laden with provisions of any sort, from home waters to the ports of the prospective belligerent. Continually,

[1] Letter of J. Walsh & Co., 16th January 1813. A similar situation arose when the Linen Board tried to exclude the inferior grades of flax seed from the Irish market. The oil-mills at once remonstrated at the loss of what was to them a highly important raw material.

as the French arms progressed over the continent of Europe, fresh nations were forced to join her in war against Great Britain, and so hardly a year passed but that the great provision trade, the staple of Ireland, was shaken and thrown into confusion by the issue of some fresh embargo. Even when an embargo was not in force, ships engaged in the export of provisions were not allowed to leave port until their owners bound themselves in large sums and gave securities as a guarantee that they would not carry their cargoes to feed the population of hostile countries. The fear of famine was so strong in the minds of statesmen that they were apparently afraid of their enemies buying up their food reserves and starving them out. Sometimes the embargoes were imposed for other reasons. In 1805, the year of Trafalgar, all merchant ships were detained in port until the pressgangs had gone their rounds and collected sufficient men to fill the vacancies in the fleet.[1] How curious is the contrast between the fiery and heroic Nelson at one end of the scale and at the other the poor seafaring man torn from his forecastle, very much against his will, to point a gun and wield a boarding-pike on a man-o'-war!

Instances might easily be multiplied of harmful restraints on trade. The traffic with the colonies was rendered expensive and difficult, owing to the provisions of the Navigation Act. Commerce with

[1] Letter of Lord Hawkesbury, 7th May 1805, with copy of Order in Council of 1st May 1805.

India was confined to certain ports, and had to be conducted in a particular manner. Even the coasting trade was hampered, owing to the excessive formalities and burdensome dues at the various ports of call. The result was that the smaller class of vessel was driven out of the business almost altogether. A small ship carrying a cargo not very valuable in proportion to its weight, as, for example, potatoes or building stone, could hardly earn a clear profit after paying all its expenses.[1] As a consequence the coasting trade very largely passed out of Irish hands. In 1818 a Bill was introduced to amend the system so as to bear less hardly on the poorer class of shipowner. Apparently the desired effect was produced, for Ireland now has quite a fair share of the coasting trade along her own shores and to England and Scotland.

As regards the members of the commercial community, they do not seem to have differed in their chief characteristics from their successors of to-day. Trade was, however, then a good deal more adventurous than it is now; there were bigger prizes to be gained and bigger risks to be run. It must be remembered that the penalty of failure was not merely the loss of one's livelihood and a humiliating passage through the Bankruptcy Court; it meant besides, in most cases, the confinement of the defaulter for an indefinite period in an abominable debtors' prison, while his wife and children starved

[1] Letter of the Knight of Kerry, May 19, 1818.

outside. The vicissitudes of commercial life were continually bringing men from luxury into a misery more abject than we can well conceive. On the other hand, the profits of success were great, for prices ruled high and a couple of lucky ventures might make a man's fortune. There is a certain note of recklessness, something of the spirit of the gambler, to be traced in the commercial history of the period. Yet, on the whole, the very same qualities that make for success now did not fail of their effect then. A clear head, a quick perception, a patient and persistent industry, never lack their proper reward. In this connection it may be well to remark the great prominence of the Quakers in mercantile affairs. In several of the southern towns they were the acknowledged heads and spokesmen of the local merchants, and their letters to the Government are models of commercial correspondence. Although they sound a little quaint with their "thee's" and "thou's," their use of "Respected Friend" for "Dear Sir," and of "2nd day" and the like for our heathenish names for the days of the week and months of the year, they exhibit nevertheless a sound common sense, a grasp of essential facts, and a turn for lucid exposition that make it easy to understand how their authors had attained their position. The foundation and successful working of Chambers of Commerce in the provincial towns seem to be largely due to the efforts of the Quaker merchants.

It is curious, too, as showing the antiquity of Irish industrial theories, that the cry "Support home industries" was raised on occasion quite as loudly and with as little apparent effect as it is now. For instance, in 1797 there was sharp local distress in Cork, especially among the weavers, and the mayor and chief inhabitants met and resolved as follows:—

> "That the exclusive use and consumption of Irish manufactures for twelve months from this date, and as much longer as the necessities of the time shall require, is the only effectual and permanent mode of alleviating the distresses of the working manufacturers.
>
> "That we pledge ourselves solemnly not to purchase any article of wearing apparel or furniture, but of the manufactures of Ireland, for twelve months from this date and as much longer as the necessities of the case will require."[1]

But apparently either the citizens failed to keep up to the standard they had set themselves (which, indeed, is no easy matter, as those who have tried a similar plan of action in these times will admit), or else the policy failed of the results anticipated. The manufactures of Cork gradually declined, until the hum of the loom was no longer heard in that city. Irishmen are slow to realise that the only reliable way to achieve industrial success is to turn out an article that is thoroughly good value

[1] Printed resolutions adopted at a meeting held April 14, 1797.

for the price charged, whatever it may be, and is able to hold its own in any market, either at home or abroad, without any adventitious aids. Furthermore, when a reputation for excellence has been attained by any commodity, no effort must be spared to maintain the quality of the article at its original high level. Nothing is more depressing than to read that Irish butter and salt provisions, once held in high esteem, were beginning to be less called for, owing to negligence in manufacture, bad packing, or petty frauds by the exporter.[1]

The position of the Irish workman has very much improved during the last century. He is better paid and better treated in every way. In 1801 one set of skilled labourers, the Dublin coachsmiths,[2] whose trade involved much endurance of heat and manipulation of heavy weights, worked fourteen hours a day, viz. from 6 A.M. to 8 P.M. Very few trades worked less than twelve hours a day. Unskilled labour could be had in the country districts for a shilling or even tenpence a day. There was little or no supervision by the State of the conditions of employment. It is true that by an Act of 1802 provision was made for the appointment of visitors by the local magistrates to attend occasionally at the various workshops and report on the physical and moral well-being of the persons employed, especially the apprentices. But, on the

[1] Letters of Belfast Chamber of Commerce, &c., March 1818.
[2] Coachsmiths' petition, September 1801.

whole, the State at this period, numerous as were its regulations as to the commodities, the mere bales or barrels, which the manufacturer produced, took hardly any note of his relations with the human beings in his employment.[1] If it interfered at all, it was usually on the side of the master. For example, the law was particularly strict against combinations intended to regulate hours or wages. An Act of the third year of George II. declared all such unions or societies to be illegal and imposed a penalty of three months' imprisonment. By another (17 Geo. II.) trade combinations were declared "unlawful assemblies" and were punishable as such. One of the Linen Acts increased the penalty to six months' imprisonment and three whippings.[2] Theoretically the law was as severe against employers who combined to affect the conditions of employment as it was against workmen, but in practice it was seldom or never put in force against the former, while the men's leaders were continually being prosecuted.

The result of all this severity was, as might be expected, not the abandonment of the unions, but an accession of bitterness and fury to the struggle.

[1] It is significant that no restriction was put on the employment of child labour. The Dublin Society even thought it wise to give premiums for the best way of utilising the services of children, and some employers congratulated themselves on so simple a means of getting rid of the "immoral journeyman."

[2] W. Ball's letter of Dec. 6, 1802, and its enclosures contain an analysis of English and Irish laws on this subject.

The men's societies had to meet in secret, like so many conspirators, at the mercy of any treacherous person among their number who might like to curry favour for himself by denouncing them to the police or to the masters. If the printed rules of their associations form any criterion, their aims were not unjustifiable. For instance, in 1794 the Dublin Journeymen Shoemakers' Union seems to have been mainly concerned with the status of the persons to be admitted to the trade, collections for men out of work, and the like.[1] But in that very year several of their number were imprisoned for offences against the law forbidding combinations.

The workmen, labouring under a sense of injustice, fell into a state of sullen discontent which broke out into occasional acts of turbulence and ferocious revenge. Strikes and disputes were of frequent occurrence, and were almost always marked by outrages of some sort or another. In 1816, at Belfast, an attempt was made to blow up the house of an obnoxious employer by gunpowder thrust in through the window. The two canal companies, then the largest employers of labour in Ireland, were continually at variance with their men, and had on such occasions the greatest difficulty to keep their boats from being sunk, their sluices and embankments from being broken. Often whole sections of the waterway had to be placed under military protection. Again, in 1820 the

[1] Printed rules enclosed with petition of Lord Mayor, examinations, &c., April–August 1794.

United Trades of Limerick, apparently with the connivance of the mayor, assumed a most extraordinary dominance over that city, and issued to the employers peremptory edicts, which they enforced by intimidation and mob violence.[1] At one time it looked as if armed force would be required to quell the rising spirit of disorder, but by the exertions of the local Roman Catholic clergy peace was restored without any further bloodshed. It must be confessed, however, that though the policy of mistrust was sometimes carried too far, the statesmen of that day, especially with the example of France before their eyes, were not unreasonable in their fear of an unbridled democracy. The artisan classes were as yet unfit to be entrusted with much power. Their actions seem to have often been dictated by an ignorance and recklessness now happily becoming much rarer among the people and those who lead them.

The stranger, for example, though he came from no farther than the next county, was often persecuted. Thus at Carrignavar,[2] near Cork, Kerrymen were the subject of a great hostile demonstration. Similarly Connaught labourers were maltreated by the men of King's County on the ground that they worked under the local rate.[3] In times of distress local selfishness prevented the surplus of one district

[1] Various letters and papers, Nov. 1820–Jan. 1821.
[2] Letters of Justin M'Carthy and Father Donovan, Oct. 22, 1815
[3] Letter of J. Bagot, Aug. 25, 1820.

from being sent to supply the wants of another. Ships laden with potatoes were beset by angry mobs, who would not allow them to leave the quays. "Hard times," when they came, were ascribed to any causes but the true ones; the people had to find some sort of scapegoat, often some quite innocent person. The depression of trade was ascribed to the taking of apprentices, the avarice of employers, the intervention of "forestallers and regraters" (in other words, those who bought in advance at wholesale prices to retail subsequently), and a dozen other reasons. And wherever there was an object of popular dislike there would sooner or later be riots and turbulence, which were angrily and sharply suppressed by the authorities. Decidedly all was not well in the industrial world a hundred years ago.

CHAPTER II

FINANCE, TAXATION, AND CURRENCY

At the time when the Union with England took place, Ireland was just beginning to be involved in severe financial difficulties. It is true that deficits had not been unknown to the eighteenth century Chancellors of the Exchequer, and a national debt had for many years been slowly accumulating. But, nevertheless, the financial operations of Irish governments were as yet on such a small scale that they could not produce any marked results whether for good or ill. The revenue was small, it is true, but, on the other hand, there were not many demands to meet. Taxes were light, and public officials were as yet not numerous. The country, it must be remembered, had not long emerged from the stage in its development during which, like a small and self-contained modern colony just beginning its existence, it had very little army, no navy, no public schools, a negligible national debt, and only a rudimentary civil service.

The greatest source of expense was the military establishment. Ireland maintained a force of 15,000 regular soldiers, supporting them even when sent

on foreign service. The cost of this body of men averaged rather more than half a million annually, even in peace time. Occasionally she contributed to the upkeep of the British navy, but not on any fixed scale or according to any definite system. Indeed, these grants, like the similar offers of assistance from the oversea colonies in our own day, were usually the outcome of some outburst of patriotism or gratitude called forth by particular circumstances, and passing away as popular feeling on the subject cooled down again. Such, for instance, was the well-known vote carried by Grattan, immediately after the concession of legislative independence, of £100,000 towards the expenses of recruiting seamen for the fleet.

The Civil List voted for the support of the king, his attendants and officials, was another heavy item, rendered still more odious and burdensome by the abuses which had begun to cluster around it. It never reached the proportions of the military votes, being limited by statute to £145,000,[1] but it was closely associated with an utterly unwarranted and corrupt expenditure on pensions. The total amount annually distributed in this way was well over £100,000. There was little or no pretence of relieving the necessitous or the deserving. The relatives or even the mistresses of royalty, noblemen of ancient lineage who had attracted the favourable notice of those in power, supple poli-

[1] 33 Geo. III., c. 34.

ticians who had bartered themselves away and received their reward in the shape of an endowment for life—all these types were represented on the Irish Pension List and drew thousands of pounds from public funds, while the widows and orphans of men who had perished in the service of the State were but grudgingly accorded a scanty pittance.[1] Many of the recipients were quite unconnected with the country on which they were thus quartered; some were not even of British birth. The scandals of the pension system in Ireland surpassed even those of Great Britain; in fact, ministers often relegated to the Irish list names which they dared not, for fear of Parliament, insert in the British. A tremendous engine for attaining political ends by means of bribery was thus placed in the hands of Government, and indeed it is practically certain that the Union could not have been carried had not its promoters been able to promise pensions, places, and titles to all who would join their ranks.

The Irish Parliament had often tried to cut down this poisonous upas-tree in their midst, but never attained any measure of success. In 1793, by the Act already referred to, which fixed the Civil List at £146,000, it was ordered that the expenditure on pensions should be reduced until it reached the sum of £80,000; but, owing largely to the weakness

[1] Princes of Mecklenberg-Strelitz and the like drew as much as £10,000 a year each, while the widows of officers killed in action could only obtain £50 a year.

of the legislature and its inability to exercise an effective control over the administration, the statute was nugatory from the beginning. If such efforts had been more fortunate, the country could have lived well within its income, in peace time at all events, and could have set something aside for public works of utility or ornament. In this latter direction the activity of the Irish Parliament, hampered as it was, was very creditable, and their outlay for such purposes, for instance, as the improvement of the capital and the construction of a system of inland waterways was fully justified by results.[1]

On the whole, therefore, though there was a good deal of extravagance and occasional periods of distress owing to bad harvests or foreign wars, financial problems did not become serious until the end of the eighteenth century. *Pauper sum in meo ære* might have been the Treasury motto. Ireland was poor, but not embarrassed for money. Between 1780 and 1790 the revenue averaged £1,600,000, and the national debt was still a little under two millions. But the war with revolutionary France soon brought about a change. The cost of Irish troops serving in the field became a heavy item, but still more expensive were the precautions which had now to be taken against domestic

[1] The most admired public building in Dublin (the Custom House) and its finest street (Sackville Street) owe their origin to the Irish Parliament. To it must also be ascribed the initiation of the two great canals which connect Dublin with the Shannon.

rebellion and invasion from abroad. The propaganda of the United Irishmen rapidly gained adherents, and their openly expressed intention of calling in the French to their assistance rendered it necessary to increase the garrison of Ireland, thus laying an extra burden on the country.[1] As the war went on the regular regiments were more and more urgently required in the fighting line, and, in order to permit them to leave for the Continent, the militia were embodied for garrison duty, and a new force of yeomanry volunteers organised to keep the country districts quiet. Fortifications had to be constructed, arms and clothing distributed, an elaborate system of intelligence devised; in a thousand ways the expenses of the war and the rebellion mounted up. Taxation, of course, was increased, but the additional amount brought in was far from sufficient to meet the needs of the situation. The closing years of the century were accordingly marked by a dismal series of deficits, each larger than its predecessor. The years 1797 and 1798 witnessed a dangerous rebellion and more than one attempt at invasion. It was no longer possible to raise in Ireland, either by taxation or loan, the sums required for the public service. During those two years £3,800,000 had been borrowed in England for Irish purposes, and before the century was out another five millions had been added to the total.

[1] Ireland bore the expenses of her own garrison, whether great or small.

Within a single decade the national debt had leaped from two millions to twenty-eight millions.[1] The rate of interest was invariably high, ranging from 5 to 6¼ per cent., and the annual payments on this head were accordingly at least £1,400,000, a terrible dead-weight for the exchequer of a small country to carry. It was impossible to meet expenditure out of revenue, and borrowing only aggravated the difficulty by increasing the amount of the permanent charges for interest on loans. National bankruptcy seemed inevitable and imminent, and indeed the prospect of some such misfortune gave to the supporters of the Union their strongest argument. Ireland standing alone, they said, was doomed to disaster; associated with Great Britain and empowered to avail herself of the credit of the richer country, she might hope to weather the storm. But the speakers had very little idea how violent and how long-continued that storm was destined to be. They did not dream that fifteen years of Titanic conflict lay before them.

The financial clauses of the Act of Union provided that Ireland should bear two-seventeenths of the whole expenditure of the United Kingdom, and that the British and Irish debts should not be united until such time as the Irish debt reached two-seventeenths of the whole amount owed by the United Kingdom, both countries included. When this stage was attained the exchequers might be amal-

[1] Account furnished Feb. 14, 1805.

gamated and a uniform system of taxation imposed, subject to such abatements in favour of Ireland as might be thought advisable. Castlereagh arrived at this proportion of two-seventeenths by a complicated calculation based on the consumption of dutiable commodities in each country and the value of their imports and exports. Its accuracy was much questioned at the time by Grattan, and Foster and Sir J. Parnell declared that one-tenth would have been a much fairer ratio to adopt. As a matter of fact, owing to the lack of proper statistics, there existed but little data from which to draw a sound and just conclusion. Viewed in the light of subsequent events, the cure for national bankruptcy was almost as bad as the disease. Under the new system Ireland had no longer a separate account as regards imperial expenditure incurred within her own borders; the United Kingdom took over the whole charge in that respect, so that forts in Cork Harbour and regiments in Wexford were no longer a direct drain on the Irish exchequer. But, on the other hand, the strain of contributing two-seventeenths of whatever might be the total outlay on imperial services was altogether too great for Ireland. For fifteen years after the Union Great Britain was pouring out money like water in her efforts to keep up a resistance to Napoleon; she was sending out expeditions in all directions, and even subsidising the flagging and exhausted powers of the Continent. The pace was too great for

Ireland. She could not raise the required two-seventeenths, and had to make up the difference by loans. Accordingly her debt mounted up with even greater rapidity after than before the Union. By 1817 it had reached £112,000,000, and as the British debt by this time was £737,000,000, they were thus in the proportion to each other which had been fixed as a preliminary condition for any possible amalgamation of the two exchequers. It was evident that some such step would have to be taken, or else the financial terms of the Union would have to be revised, for the country could not pay the interest on its debt, much less go on borrowing. Accordingly the exchequers were amalgamated, and the Irish Treasury ceased to exist. The debts were united and made a joint charge on the United Kingdom, and from thenceforward all revenue, both British and Irish, was paid into a "Consolidated Fund of the United Kingdom," from which payments were to be made indiscriminately. Ireland thus lost the financial independence which, however burdensome it had latterly become, she had often been able to use to good purpose. The new system centralised the department of finance in London. The importance of the measure was not realised at the time, and there seems to have been little or no opposition. There was no "Nationalist" party to struggle for the last relics of autonomy; Grattan and his followers had long acquiesced in the Union; O'Connell's move-

ment was essentially religious in its basis, and did not turn to the "Repeal" campaign until the great religious question was settled.

The fiscal system of Ireland at the period which followed the Union is naturally a reflex of the harassed circumstances of the Government. The actual cost of that measure had been heavy enough. An enormous sum was required to pay compensation to the borough-mongers whom the Union deprived of their property. Over eighty seats were abolished, and for each £15,000 was paid to the proprietor. There were also officials whose situations had ceased to exist and who required compensation. Again it needed a very long purse, indeed, to liquidate all the promises of pensions and gratuities which had been made by Cornwallis and Castlereagh.

Mutatis mutandis, the State in Ireland was almost as distressed for money as Dick Swiveller in the novel. At one time only £8000 is in the Treasury, and a remittance has hastily to be obtained from England.[1] At another a viceroy receives instructions that he is to let pensions run into arrears if the money is more urgently required for public purposes.[2] Every possible expedient for raising money was tried. Wretched little taxes, trivial in yield and difficult of collection—such, for instance, as that on hair powder—were imposed from

[1] Unsigned letter to W. Pitt, April 25, 1797.

[2] Lord Hardwicke's general instructions on taking over office, April 30, 1801. Five years previous a Chief Secretary had, in order to avert a mutiny, been obliged to borrow money on his *personal* security to pay the troops.

time to time, and taken off when they were found to cause more trouble than they were worth. Imposts, the productiveness of which had been proved by experience, were increased to the furthest limit they could bear. Some of these were almost as odious to the private citizen as a poll-tax would be. The tax-collector came and counted the fireplaces, and sent in a demand for so much to be paid on each hearth. Similarly there was a tax which was assessed on the number of windows in each dwelling. Thus warmth and light, which are essential to the health and happiness of every human being, were laid under contribution. In the endeavour to diminish their liability as much as possible, householders blocked up windows and removed fireplaces, wherever they could. But they avoided one evil only to fall into another. The physicians of the day are unanimous in ascribing the violence and persistency of epidemic fevers in Ireland to the suitable conditions for their development afforded by the cold, damp, and ill-ventilated rooms in which so many of the poor were compelled to live. It is true that the lower grades of accommodation were exempt from both taxes. Houses with only one hearth or with less than five windows were not liable to assessment; but the fact always remains that, let legislators try how they will, the burden must fall at length on those lowest in the social scale. The landlords of Dublin altered their premises so as to evade the tax, and their tenants accordingly died of typhus. The scale of these duties was, however, not very

onerous, ranging in 1804 from about 2s. 6d. per hearth for small houses to 8s. 8d. for large mansions. At the same period the window duty ranged from 5s. per window, according to the total number chargeable. Both taxes were extremely unpopular, and were abolished after the close of the war.

The Customs was the most productive of all the revenue-earning departments, bringing in usually nearly two million pounds. Nothing was too small or too trivial to escape its unwelcome scrutiny. The mere list of articles liable to duty on importation extends over eighty pages of Hautenville's book, and includes such unusual subjects for taxation as flower roots, fossils, and frankincense. Except possibly in the United States, so complicated a tariff schedule could not now be paralleled in any country. Its intricacy was increased by the system of "drawbacks" or rebates, payable when an imported commodity was again exported. Another peculiarity of the customs system was that it did not spare exports, as it does at present. In Ireland duties were levied on various commodities when shipped out of the country, and among the number were included even such staple products as bacon, beef, butter, and pork. However, the tax in such cases appears to have been small, usually 1½ per cent. *ad valorem.*

The contributions of the Excise to public funds fell not far short of those from the maritime branch of the revenue service.[1] The list of commodities

[1] In 1808 the Excise produced £1,750,000.

liable to excise was much longer than at present, and was more varied in its contents. There was, to take a couple of instances, a duty on paper, and a very remarkable duty payable as commission to the State on the value of goods sold by auction.[1] But perhaps the most noteworthy feature of this section of fiscal policy was the extension of the system of licences to cover various trades and professions. It is significant of the narrowness of modern practice in this respect that "licensed trader" has come to be synonymous with "publican" and "licensed premises" with "public house." But it was not so during the great war. The seller of intoxicating liquors had to pay heavily for his privilege; the scale ranged from £6 12s. in country districts to £33 in large towns. But various other classes, as, for example, vendors of tea, pedlars, tanners, and paper manufacturers, were compelled to contribute to the Exchequer in this way.

The great trend of fiscal policy at this time, however, led away from such direct imposts and favoured the growth of indirect taxation, preferably on articles which were in general consumption and were thought likely to produce a definite and valuable addition to the revenue. Some such considerations as these had led originally to the imposition of taxes on beer, tea, sugar, spirits, and tobacco. During the pressure of the war successive Chancellors of the Exchequers found it more satisfactory to

[1] Threepence in the £ in 1804.

develop to their fullest extent these old and well-tried taxes than to rack their brains for new sources of revenue, or to accept any of the suggestions poured in on them by members of the general public. The duties on articles of popular consumption were doubled and even trebled during the war. Even after the pressure was over, the same influences continued to prevail, especially as regarded anything which might be deemed a "luxury." Thus, though tea and sugar were eventually relieved, and beer, which was considered more a food than an intoxicant, was not very heavily taxed, the duties on spirits and tobacco continued to increase until they reached their present remarkable figures.[1] The assimilation of taxation in Ireland to the English system, which began after the consolidation of the exchequers, brought about an increase in indirect taxation of this kind. In the case of spirits, too, the rise in the duty was largely due to the desire of the authorities to restrain that widespread indulgence in whiskey which was without doubt the cause of half the turbulence and the outrages that disgraced the country.

Next to the Customs and Excise in revenue-earning capacity came the Stamp Office. It produced from £400,000 to £500,000 annually. It seems to have been an expensive and difficult department to manage, necessitating a heavy outlay

[1] Now from 400 to 600 per cent. *ad valorem* in each case.

for carriage and for the upkeep of a very numerous staff, which was so scattered over the country as not to be amenable to control. The Post Office contributed only a small quota, from £50,000 to £70,000, a much smaller total than the present annual profits of any of the larger Irish railway companies. Transportation, whether of goods or passengers, was as yet too costly and laborious to do much more than pay its way.

Besides these orthodox sources of revenue, the State had recourse to other ingenious but sometimes rather questionable methods. At the cost of a certain amount of moral deterioration, it was always possible to gain a very considerable sum by organising State lotteries on the plan still pursued in some parts of the Continent. The actual sale of the tickets was usually conducted through intermediaries, but the drawing was under the supervision of Government, and the prizes were guaranteed by the same authority. As soon as the intention of holding a State lottery was announced, advertisements were inserted in the newspapers inviting tenders (at so much per ticket) from speculators, who were to receive in return for their money the right of selling the whole of the tickets issued. This was a valuable privilege, for although the price of tickets fluctuated from time to time, they usually sold at a very considerable premium on their face value, and the bidding was sometimes very spirited. The difference between the amount of

the accepted tender and the sum required to pay the prize-winners and conduct the drawing generally, represented the Government profit on the transaction. The amount realised varied widely. It was rarely less than £80,000, and sometimes as much as £200,000. But, as will be shown later, this mode of raising money had a most demoralising effect on the people generally, high and low, and was eventually abandoned altogether.

The same appeal to the gambling instinct, curiously blended in this case with prudential, common-sense considerations, such as are the basis of modern life insurance, is to be found in the system of "Tontines." A number of persons combined to lend money to the Government on condition of each receiving an annuity until the date of his or her death. So far it was something like purchasing a life annuity, but the peculiarity of the Tontine was that as the lives fell in one by one the annuities payable to the survivors were increased proportionately, until at last one man was receiving in his own person as much as had been formerly paid year by year to all his deceased fellow-members. When he also died the Tontine was at an end. It was life insurance in an inverted form; the longer a member lived, the more profit he made on his bargain, whereas under the present system the greater the duration of a man's life, the more he has to pay in premiums. From a financial point of view it was not so productive as the lotteries, for

it involved a good deal of expensive clerical work and book-keeping.[1] Morally, too, it was objectionable, as giving the annuitants a direct interest in procuring the death or disappearance of their fellow-members.

Perhaps it will best illustrate the nature of Irish finance during and subsequent to the war if the accounts of national income and expenditure for typical years of war and peace are given in tabular form. For the sake of comparison, similar accounts of the present day are also set forth (see opposite page).

On comparing the receipts of 1826 with those of 1808, it will be seen at once that the taxpayer has in the latter year been accorded a much-needed relief, especially in connection with customs and stamp duties. Lotteries, which brought in a good round sum in 1808, do not appear as a source of revenue in 1826. On the other hand, in 1826 there is a heading "Repayment of advances for public works," which indicates an important development of State policy. For works (roads, harbours, court-houses, hospitals, &c.) the utility and necessity of which were clearly shown, the Government was accustomed to advance considerable sums of money from time to time to the Grand Juries or other local authorities, allowing the repayment to be spread over a number of years, so as not to be too heavy a tax on county funds. In 1808, as in

[1] There was a Clerk of the Tontines.

COMPARISON OF REVENUES

	War Time, 1808.	£	Peace Time, 1826.	£	Modern Times, 1906–7.	£
Ordinary Revenue	Customs . .	2,200,268	Customs . .	1,513,948	Customs . .	2,610,000
	Excise . .	1,689,455	Excise . .	1,422,746	Excise . .	5,607,000
	Stamps . .	577,480	Stamps . .	425,336	Estate Duties and General Stamps . .	967,000
	Post Office .	68,900	Post Office .	74,000	Property and Income Tax . .	999,000
	Poundage Fees, Pells, &c. . . .	35,301	Miscellaneous . . .	9,595	Post Office and Telegraphs . .	1,060,000
	Total of ordinary revenues . .	4,571,405	Imprests, &c.	18,588	Miscellaneous, (Crown Lands, &c.)	156,000
			Advances for public works repaid . .	158,381		
Extraordinary Revenue	Lotteries .	123,680				
	Advances repaid, gain on exchange, &c.	88,856				
	Duties appropriated for local expenditure .	18,346				
	Total ordinary and extraordinary, independent of loans . .	4,802,291				
	Raised by Loans . .	5,389,728				
	Total . .	10,192,019	Total . .	3,622,594	Total (*including Local Taxation revenue*) . .	11,399,000
					Estimated true revenue . . .	9,490,000

Note—These accounts and those given later are presented in the regular official form customary at each period. Fractions of a pound have been omitted in the statement, although they have been taken into account in the additions. Consequently the totals in 1808 and 1826 may appear to be slightly overstated. The "estimated true revenue" in col. 3 is obtained by allowing for sums collected in Great Britain, but really paid by Ireland, and *vice versa*, e.g. for duty on tea imported at London, but subsequently consumed in Ireland. See Parly. Paper No. 208, of 1909.

previous war years, there is a very large deficit, which is met by a loan of five millions.

Comparing both these periods, however, with 1906–1907, there are remarkable changes to note, both in the introduction of new sources of revenue and the development of old. The income-tax, undreamt of in the early nineteenth century, except perhaps in the shape of the futile and often-evaded taxes on absentee landlords, produces nearly a million annually. Stamps have ceased to be of much value from the financial point of view, bringing in much less than the estate duties (death duties, legacy tax, &c.), with which they are now associated in the table. But the most remarkable increase is in excise, which is now reckoned at five millions and a half, instead of the one million and a half of 1808 or 1826. This appears to be due almost entirely to the spirit duty, the continual increase of which has already been mentioned. The Irish Post Office is credited with a good sum in the revenue accounts, but it will be seen from the accounts of expenditure given later that it costs more than it earns, and is accordingly conducted at a loss. Distances are too great, and owing to the lack of commerce letters are not sufficiently numerous, to repay the cost of carriage.

The total revenue raised at present, allowing for refunds and grants in relief of local taxation, is about nine millions, or more than double the revenue of either 1808 or 1826. A heavy load,

indeed, but one which is borne with apparently much greater ease and much less popular suffering than the lighter burdens of the past. Perhaps this may only be due to a better adjustment of the weight—the substitution, for instance, of indirect for direct taxation, and of taxes on luxuries for those on necessaries of existence. Just as the traveller can carry a heavy knapsack on his shoulders, but finds a few pounds weight too much for his hand, so, thanks to the progress financiers have made in the art of adjusting the burdens they impose, a modern nation can cheerfully support a total weight of taxation which would be fiercely resented if it came in the questionable shape of hearth money or window tax. But much also is due to the increased prosperity of the Irish individual. In 1808 nine-tenths of the people, as will be shown later, lived on the brink of starvation. In many cases they earned no wages, they handled no money; they counted themselves lucky if they could grow from one year to another enough potatoes to feed themselves and their families. Such persons as these offer little or no opportunity for taxation; even in the best of times they can do no more than just struggle along, and even the most necessitous Chancellor must hesitate to apply the extra pressure that may turn indigence into absolute privation. But though there is still much poverty in Ireland, the poor have now in most cases some little margin over the cost of living, even allowing for the enhanced prices produced by

indirect taxation. Though tobacco, spirits, beer, and tea are taxed, these still remain articles of popular consumption. And besides the amelioration of the lot of the poor, there is to be noticed the growth of what may be called a middle, or, at all events, a lower middle class. As a proof of this statement there may be adduced the remarkable yield of the income-tax, from which, it must be remembered, incomes of less than £160 a year are exempt. This is essentially a tax on the middle and upper classes, and as the latter are probably neither numerous nor wealthy, it must be inferred that a considerable portion of the revenue from this source is contributed by an Irish middle class.

The statistics of expenditure in the same three years are given on page 67.

These also offer a field for curious comparisons. In 1808 the interest on the debt was a heavy charge, nearly three millions and a half, but worse than even this was the obligation of meeting two-seventeenths of the imperial expenditure. Under this arrangement the share of the army expenses alone amounted to over four millions, and the whole contribution required from Ireland towards the expenses of the Empire generally was five millions and a half. Ireland could not raise by taxes much more than sufficed to meet her own internal expenditure of four millions, and had to borrow to meet her liabilities under the Union.

Comparing 1808 with 1826, it will be noted that

COMPARISON OF EXPENDITURES

	War Time, 1808.	£	Peace Time, 1826.	£	Modern Times, 1906–7.	£
Separate Expenditure for Ireland.	Interest (on debt), cost of Sinking Fund . .	3,499,453	Miscellaneous . . .	450,946	Consolidated Fund . .	164,500
			Consolidated Fund . .	301,427	Voted . .	4,596,500
	Interest on Exchequer Bills . .	8,287	Civil List .	207,000	*Local Taxation Account* Local Taxation Revenue	406,500
	Issues for purposes appointed by late Irish Parliament	444,230	Advances for Works, Distress, &c. . . .	546,922	Exchequer Revenue	1,059,000
					Total Civil Charges .	6,226,500
	Issues appropriated for local purposes . .	20,595			Collection of Taxes . .	243,000
					Post Office Service .	1,209,000
	Total separate expense for Ireland .	3,972,567				
Joint Expenditure with Gt. Britain, ¾ of whole.	Civil List, pensions and other permanent chares .	445,441				
	Payments in anticipation of receipts (Militia, &c.) .	238,534				
	Army and Ordnance	4,122,288				
	Miscellaneous. . .	339,232	TOTAL EXPENDITURE FOR IRISH PURPOSES	1,506,295	TOTAL EXPENDITURE	7,678,500
	Vote of Credit . . .	418,230				
	Total joint expenditure with Gt. Britain	5,563,728	*Total revenue from all sources*	3,622,594	*Deduct above from estimated true revenue, which is*	9,490,000
	GRAND TOTAL OF EXPENDITURE	9,536,295	*Balance, being contribution to Imperial expenditure*	2,116,299	*Contribution to Imperial expenditure*	1,811,500

the item for Civil List, which includes pensions, has been much reduced. The fierce indignation which had been aroused against the Irish pension system, both in the Irish and the Imperial Parliament, had at last brought about a reform. A principle was gradually established that no large sums were to be distributed in this way unless with the knowledge and consent of Parliament, and that none but those who could show some sort of honourable claim were to be allowed to receive money from the State. Accordingly, as the old and unworthy type of pensioner passed away, his place was taken by the veteran, the widow, and the orphan, the proper recipients of such relief.

Again, on a comparison of 1826 with 1906–7, it will be noticed how enormously the expenditure on the Civil Service has grown. Even allowing, which is very unlikely, that the three items "Miscellaneous," "Consolidated Fund," and "Civil List" in 1826 represent solely expenses of this kind, these three taken together do not account for a million pounds. But in the more recent period, the amount "voted" by Parliament, most of which is certainly Civil Service expenditure, is over four millions and a half. It is easy to make party capital out of these figures as showing that the government of Ireland is proportionately "the most costly in the world," but the true explanation is that since 1826 the State in Ireland has been continually compelled —sometimes, it must be remembered, by popular

outcry—to undertake new spheres of work, some of which are considered more suitable for municipal or even private effort in other countries. The three items of police, education, and land administration[1] —the two former of which are in England, in great measure, local charges, while the third is an altogether unique department produced by conditions peculiar to Ireland—account for the greater part of this large expense. Again, even where an Irish department has a counterpart in England, as in the case of the Agricultural Department and the Board of Works, it will often be found that the Irish office has a far wider range of powers than the English, and costs more accordingly. The Board of Works in London does not busy itself with harbours in remote parts of the country, nor does the English Department of Agriculture train and send out a number of lecturers and demonstrators into the rural districts. Administration in Ireland costs so much because the State has taken on itself a much more extensive range of duties than in any other country. The spirit of individualism is so weak that State assistance has been perpetually invoked, with the inevitable result that a sort of State Socialism—the rule, in fact, of the more or less enlightened bureaucrat—has been gradually established. This is not the place to discuss the merits or demerits of such a system, but those who advocate a policy in England that seems destined to lead to

[1] Police and education cost usually £1,300,000 each.

similar results might do well to study the working in a neighbouring country of the measures they are inclined to put forward.

Another point which deserves notice is, that however inequitable the Union bargain may have been, Great Britain does not now derive any great advantage from the connection. By far the greater part of the revenue raised in Ireland is spent in and for that country, and the residuum, which is regarded as contribution to imperial expenditure, has a tendency to diminish both absolutely and, still more, relatively to the total revenue. Thus in 1826 the contribution to imperial expenditure was £2,116,299 out of a total revenue of £3,622,594, or nearly two-thirds of the whole; in 1906–7 it was £1,811,500 out of a total of £9,490,000, or less than one-fifth.

The financial difficulties, and troubled state generally, of the country during the early nineteenth century seem to have produced a remarkable effect on the currency. The coinage was not debased by the Government itself, as has so often been the case in time of stress, but the mint appears to have been starved, and was quite unable to produce the amount required for circulation in the country. The precious metals, instead of being coined for home use, were shipped away for subsidies to Continental Powers or pay to soldiers and sailors campaigning abroad. Another drain of the currency was caused by hoarding, which always increases during times of public anxiety. First the gold

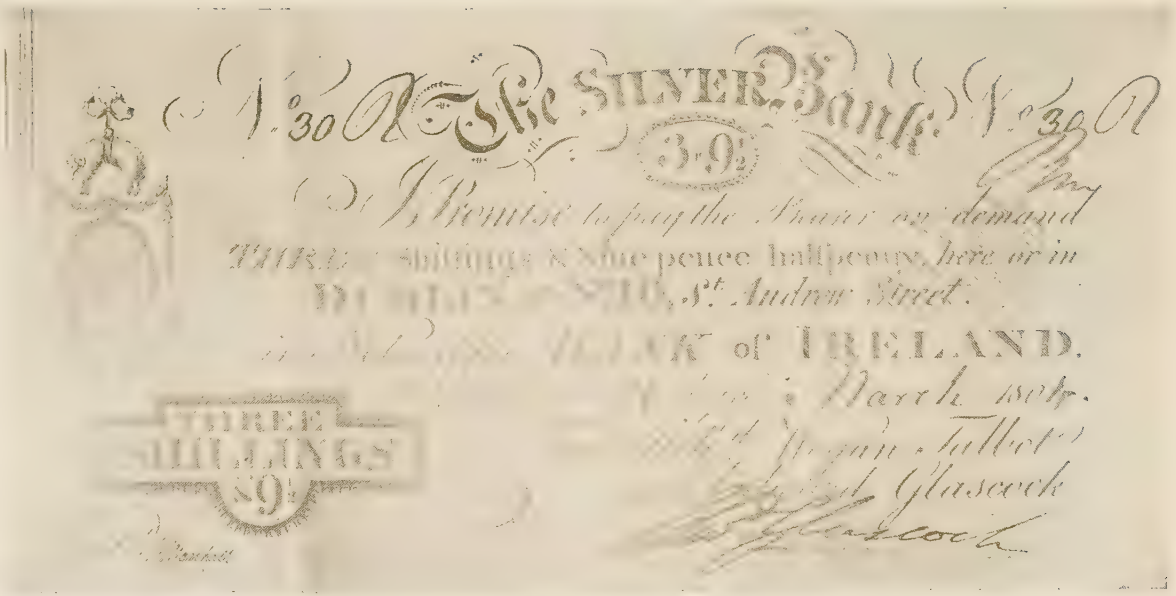
and then the silver coins began to be scarce, and finally there was very little copper to be had. The gap was filled by a number of strange and curious substitutes for the usual coin of the realm. Bank notes were poured out in profusion, often by firms of no great standing or credit. It was estimated that over £6,000,000 of paper money was in circulation. Of this total, from two to three millions were Bank of Ireland notes, which were held in better esteem than the rest, as being issued by a bank which possessed considerable resources of its own, and could rely, furthermore, on its official connection with Government. But its issues were supplemented by those of about forty private establishments, most of which were located in the country outside the range of the great Dublin bank. These notes had, for the most part, only a local circulation, and rose and fell in popular favour according as the credit of their issuers was good or the reverse. The only gold coin in circulation was the guinea; it invariably commanded a premium, and was sometimes exchanged for no less than thirty shillings of silver. The same was true, in a less degree, of Bank of Ireland notes, which were often accepted at more than their face value.

The small change of the country was in a state of even greater confusion. At the time of the Union the mint silver had not been replenished for years, and was worn out and defaced. These defects might have been borne with had the coins

been plentiful, but, on the contrary, they were so scarce that people were beginning to forget what they looked like.[1] The vacant place in the silver currency seems to have been taken by counterfeits, well known as such by all men, but universally accepted in default of better money. In 1804 Lord Liverpool was informed that counterfeit money to the nominal value of £400,000 was in circulation in Ireland.[2] The bankers, too, had contributed to the complexities of the situation by issuing "silver notes," which were intended to take the place of small change. They were for very small sums, ranging from 6d. to 5s. The chief objection to their use was that they lent themselves to fraud of every kind. As they only represented small amounts, the issuer could not afford to incur much expenditure on making them difficult to counterfeit. If there was profit to be made out of counterfeiting metal pieces, there was much more to be had from forging "silver notes." The metal in a base shilling might cost a few pence, but a skilful printer could, at a much smaller expense, duplicate "silver notes" in such a way as to defy detection, unless by an expert. It may easily be guessed how the poor and the simple were victimised under this system. Their wages were paid them in the worst sort of money, while

[1] The exhaustion of the gold and silver currency was largely due to emigration. Persons who intended to leave Ireland converted their possessions into cash, stipulating to receive either guineas or good silver, as these could easily be carried abroad, and would always possess some value, no matter where the journey might end.

[2] Memorandum of Lord Liverpool, April 5, 1804.



"SILVER NOTE" OF MALAHIDE BANK FOR 3s. 9½D.

they often found that shopkeepers would not sell their commodities, nor agents give receipts for rent, unless they were paid in guineas or Bank of Ireland notes. The perpetual exchanging from one kind to the other gave manifold opportunities to the sharper for swindling and knavery, and simply frittered away the substance of the poor piecemeal.

In 1804 the Government endeavoured to deal with the situation. The issue of notes for sums less than £5 was forbidden to private banks for the future. Orders were given that the counterfeit silver was to be refused by all Government departments, and its use "cried down" by public proclamation.[1] At the same time arrangements were made by which the Bank of Ireland was to obtain a number of silver Spanish dollars, value about four shillings each, and issue them, restamped with the legend "BANK OF IRELAND TOKEN: SIX SHILLINGS," in lieu of six-shilling pieces. Tenpenny and fivepenny pieces of a similar type were also issued. The bank made a profit on the transaction, and the new pieces were universally accepted despite their deficiency in intrinsic worth.

But, the war still continuing, the same causes which had operated to drain away the regular silver

[1] The sudden crying down of the counterfeits produced great alarm and inconvenience. At Trim, for instance, there was a dearth of bread, owing to the inability of the bakers to buy flour. They had plenty of money, which, however, having been received over the counter in retail transactions, was mostly spurious, and the millers, in view of the altered circumstances, refused to take it in payment. The deadlock lasted several days, and at one time there were serious fears of bread riots in the town.

currency produced the same effect on even the silver tokens. By 1811 pieces of that metal had gone out of circulation in Cork; in spite of the recent prohibition, they had been driven out, and their place taken, by fresh issues of "silver notes." The result of this was that a bank crisis was a very serious matter for even the "man in the street," whether he was a depositor or not. If, as occasionally happened, two or three banks failed simultaneously, he might find that what had been good money in the morning was only so much waste paper by midday. In these days of a settled and stable currency we have no idea of the trouble and confusion produced by a disturbance of the circulating medium. For sheer lack of money, recourse was had to a system of barter and substitution. In Kerry rents were paid in butter. Any transaction that required the paying down of a large sum of money was exceedingly difficult to arrange. As an amusing, but characteristic, instance it may be mentioned that in 1798 matrimonial engagements could not be carried out in Cork county, as it was impossible to raise money.[1]

The copper coinage was in much the same state as the silver. In 1800 mint halfpennies were not to be found in Ireland; it was thought they had been shipped to America.[2] The place of the penny

[1] This statement is made on the authority of Lord Longueville, whose lively letters supply so many details as to the social life of his times. Letter of 6th January 1798.

[2] Evidence of Messrs. D'Olier and Colville before a Committee of Inquiry.

(*a*)

(*b*)

(*c*)

(*d*)

(*e*)

(*f*)

CONTEMPORARY COINS AND TOKENS

(*a*) Tullamore token; (*b*) Westport token; (*c*) "Harp" penny; (*d*) Spanish coin restamped for Castlecomer; (*e*) Dublin halfpenny, Messrs. Camac; (*f*) Bank of Ireland token. For full descriptions see p. xix.

was taken by tokens of every kind, issued either by municipalities or by great employers of labour, such as manufacturers or landed proprietors. The action of the issuers in this case was not prompted by a desire for profit, but rather a wish to facilitate the monetary transactions of the poor by supplying them with small change. Unless the token was made very small, its cost of production would amount to nearly as much as its face value, no matter how cheap the material used. These pieces had, as a rule, only a local circulation. In 1805 and 1806, soon after the first issue of the silver tokens, the copper coinage was replenished by a supply furnished by Matthew Boulton of Birmingham, under contract with the Government.

After the conclusion of the war the currency was soon set on a sounder footing. In 1817 the Irish coinage was assimilated to the British model, thus doing away with the loss consequent on exchange. The sovereign replaced the ancient guinea. In 1822 and 1823 the last set of distinctively Irish coins was issued. It consisted of pence and halfpence, and its only difference from the British pieces of the same value was that the "tail" side bore the Irish harp instead of the familiar figure of Britannia. Although these pennies are now seldom seen, their former existence is recalled by the tossing phrase "head or harp," which is the Irish equivalent of the English "head or tail."

CHAPTER III

AGRICULTURE AND LAND TENURE

That section of Irish economic history which concerns itself with the tenure and cultivation of the land is undoubtedly complicated and obscure, to many perhaps almost repellent. Yet it is of vital importance, both to the State and the people. Agriculture is, and always has been, the sole support of at least three-fourths of the population. No one inquiring into Irish problems can afford to overlook what is perhaps the greatest of all, the question of the land.

There seems to be no inherent reason why the records of Irish agriculture should be so melancholy as they are. The soil is almost uniformly fertile, in some places remarkably so. There is a good deal of mountain land around the seacoast, and a considerable amount of bog in the interior, but neither of these is hopelessly irreclaimable. Many of the bogs are on the sides of hills, and could easily be drained. The mountains, too, are seldom rugged or precipitous; their slopes are usually clothed with herbage, and provide fair grazing for cattle. There have been remarkable cases of mountain

improvement from time to time. In some cases it has only taken a few years to substitute crops of corn for the indigenous gorse and heather. The climate is not unfavourable. It is mild and equable, not nearly so hot in summer nor so cold in winter as most parts of Great Britain. A good deal of rain falls, especially towards the west and south, and the atmosphere is usually moist. This promotes the growth of vegetation in a remarkable way. Wakefield noticed that some Irish farmers when wishing to form a meadow, did not trouble to sow grass seed, but simply allowed the soil to produce its "luxuriant natural herbage." Such a country must naturally have a strong leaning towards pasturage. Cattle, accordingly, have always played a prominent part in the rural economy of Ireland. But during the period to which this volume refers tillage was much more widely and successfully practised than at the present day.

In the first place, practically every household had to raise its own food supply out of the ground in its possession. This involved the growing of a great quantity of potatoes, and also of a proportionate amount of oats; for though boiled potatoes were the staple diet, oatmeal was used for a change, and also to supply deficiencies during the two "meal months," July and August, when the old potatoes were no longer fit to eat and the new had not reached maturity. The potato crop was the first thought and the chief care of most Irish cultivators.

It required a great amount of manure, and often exhausted all the available supply, so that other crops were starved. This growing of potatoes and oats was universal throughout the island. The inhabitants of Ulster, true to their Scottish origin, preferred oatcakes or stirabout to the eternal potato, but elsewhere oats were a subsidiary crop. Next after these, but by a long interval,[1] came wheat, which was grown almost entirely for exportation to England. The Irish peasant seldom tasted baker's bread or butcher's meat. Also a considerable amount of barley was grown, just as it is now, to supply the demands of brewers and distillers for malted grain. The linen manufacture, too, was provided with its raw material from the produce of Irish soil.

Flax was grown all over the country, usually in small plots or patches; for, owing to its tendency to exhaust the soil, few farmers were willing to give up a large portion of their land to this particular crop. Linen-weaving was still a domestic industry, and it was only natural that the peasant should raise his own little crop of flax, and conduct in his own person all the operations incidental to the conversion of the raw material into the finished product.

Tillage, however, though coming more and more into favour, was far from being the most important side of Irish agriculture. Pasturage and dairy-farming appear to have been the chief mainstay of the Irish agriculturist, especially in the

[1] Wakefield estimates that there was ten times as much land under oats as under any other corn crop.

southern and western counties. Thousands of oxen were raised in the interior, sold at the local fairs, and brought down by their new owners to the nearest port. There they were slaughtered and salted down into barrels for exportation. The same trade still flourishes in Ireland, but on a much larger scale. There is, however, the important difference that Irish cattle now leave the country alive, thus preventing the establishment of the numerous subsidiary industries which take their raw material from the by-products of the provision business. For instance, when Cork was the centre of the salt-meat trade, tanners and glue manufacturers found it convenient to set up their works in a town where hides and hoofs could be so easily and cheaply obtained. The Irish bullock, as he leaves the quay to-day, is, as a rule, the rawest of raw material; he does not even represent the highest value attainable by living animals of his type. He is usually lean and "unfinished," and is frequently sent to grass for some months and fattened up for the table after his arrival in England. The cattle trade is conducted in the form which is least profitable to Ireland, but its immense volume more than makes up for its shortcomings in other respects. Still it is regrettable that this great national asset should not be developed to the highest advantage.

Sheep were not of much account in Ireland, except perhaps in mountainous districts. Their flesh, unlike that of the ox and the hog, did not

lend itself to the process of salting, and therefore could not form the subject of an export trade. Mutton in any form was not an article of popular diet, and was certainly seldom seen on the tables of the poor. Sheep were reared, it appears, mainly for their wool, which was spun[1] into yarn by the women of the family,[2] and often woven into cloth subsequently by the men. The women in some cases did whatever tailoring and dressmaking was required, and in this way the whole arduous and intricate process by which clothes are produced was carried out as a domestic industry. This is another instance of how self-sufficient and self-contained Ireland was at this period.

Pigs, on the other hand, were to be found in almost every cottage. They lived on the same fare as the human inhabitants, boiled potatoes, and were allowed much the same free quarters in living rooms as are now permitted only to dogs or cats. There was a trade in salt pork and bacon, the latter being also a domestic manufacture, for the curing was done at home, and the necessary "smoking" was easily performed by the aid of the cottage chimney.

Dairy-farms were chiefly to be found in East Munster, especially on the rich lands of Limerick,

[1] Hence the term "spinster," which simply means a "spinner," and is used in some of the early census returns to denote the occupation of all the women of a household, whether married or single.

[2] More often, however, the cloth was made up by travelling tailors, who took up their residence in a farmhouse and gave their work in return, for board lodging, and a small money payment.

Tipperary, and Waterford. Their great advantage in the eye of the large farmer was that they could easily be combined with tillage. To the poorer man the possession of a cow was a great matter, since it furnished his family with a palatable liquid adjunct to their potato diet, namely, the "skim-milk," which was left after the cream had been skimmed off to make butter. Again, when the butter had been made, there was a useful residuum in the shape of butter-milk. Butter brought a good price, and dairies seemed to have been remunerative enough, although their owners in the majority of cases did not trouble to observe the cleanliness desirable in dealing with commodities so quick to taint as milk and butter. Accordingly Irish butter was in bad repute, and, but for the limitation of supply due to the war, would hardly have maintained its place in the British markets.

From many of the foregoing statements it may be inferred that the state of agriculture was in many respects disappointing. Something was undoubtedly got out of the land, but not nearly so much as might have been. The consensus of expert opinion is that farming of every kind was carried on in a slovenly and unpractical way and with most rudimentary appliances. For instance, bullocks were used for ploughing, although it had been shown by this time that they consumed proportionately more food and gave less work in return than horses. Corn was threshed on clay floors, and consequently

became so dirty that its value deteriorated. Thatching was done with straw not properly dried and prepared, with the result that seeds germinated in the roof covering, and it soon presented the appearance of a meadow or a corn-field. From every quarter come reports of half-hearted, unskilful effort and poor results. The natural fertility of the country was nullified by the shortcomings of its inhabitants.

No doubt there were many causes which contributed to produce this widespread national inefficiency. The Penal Code directed against Roman Catholics had been in force for nearly a hundred years, and had only recently been abrogated. Most of its provisions had been expressly designed to prevent persons of that religion attaining to power or affluence. For instance, they were not permitted to acquire land by purchase, donation, or inheritance, or to take leases for longer terms than thirty-one years. If a Catholic died in possession of property, leaving children who were all of his own religion, the estate was divided equally amongst them, but if the eldest son became a Protestant he was at once made the sole heir. The manifest tendency of the entire code was to make Helots of the Catholics. Such enactments as these, with their miserable appeals to bigotry and avarice, were not ineffective in raising the status and position of the Protestants, and proportionately debasing those of the Catholics. The adherents of the former creed became a closely knit, powerful and wealthy aristoc-

racy, possessing in full measure all the virtues and vices of a hereditary ruling caste. On the other hand, those who still clung to their old religion and resisted both bribes and persecution gradually sank into a state of poverty and ignorance.[1] Considering their gloomy history, they could hardly be blamed for cherishing in their bosoms those violent political and religious animosities that sometimes broke forth in deeds of blood.

The tiller of the soil in Ireland was almost invariably a person of this depressed class, and was, as might be expected, in many ways too much of a serf to be an efficient worker. There is no advantage in enduring toil and drudgery if the toiler is not in the end sure of his recompense. Accordingly, the Irish peasant was usually indolent and easy-going, an ardent follower of sport and amusement, to either of which he was always ready to devote an amount of thought and energy rarely accorded to more serious affairs. Holidays and merry-makings were frequent, and there was a great deal of quarrelling and drunkenness on these occasions. As far as actual work was concerned, most men were quite content to earn a livelihood, and unwilling to exert themselves when once that had been attained. There was little saving, except perhaps in the form of buried hoards; there was certainly very little

[1] There were special provisions in the Penal Code to prevent Catholics from obtaining an education unless they were willing to go to the schools kept by Protestants.

tendency in rural districts to take long views and to amass capital which might be spent on remunerative projects subsequently. Ignorance acted as a bar to the study of improved methods, and poverty prevented the purchase of proper appliances.

The systems of land tenure then prevalent were not calculated to promote a better state of things. The leases were short, twenty-one or thirty-one years being the usual term. The landowner's share in the contract was, as a rule, simply to hand over the land to the tenant at the time appointed, and thereafter to receive his periodical payments; he did not repair or erect farm buildings, nor concern himself with possible improvements. Neither he nor his agent took the trouble to seek out tenants of known capacity and possessed of sufficient reserves of capital to tide over the bad times that every farmer must experience occasionally. The landlord seems only too often to have regarded his estates merely as a source of revenue, and even from this standpoint he often took a singularly short-sighted view of his own interests. He was the *grand seigneur* of his district, and, as is the case with most *grand seigneurs*, he was so extravagant and pleasure-loving as always to need money, yet too indolent and proud to devote to his property the amount of thought and attention which might relieve it of its embarrassments and set it on a sounder basis. So the land went to the highest bidder, often to an unpractical and improvident tenant, who would not cultivate the

land well and must inevitably be evicted after a few years. Of course, this carelessness in letting was not profitable in the end to those who practised it, but it brought in an immediate advantage, and was therefore almost irresistible to the landlords, who, even if they could perceive the advantage to be derived from a different policy, were as a class too deficient in patience and self-control to postpone present gains for the sake of future.[1]

The systems of tenure varied considerably from place to place. In the east and midlands there were to be found some large farms, often devoted to tillage. This quarter of Ireland exhibited by far the best methods and results. A fair proportion of the landlords were resident; many of them took an intelligent interest in their estates and restrained the malpractices of subordinates. The great evils of the Irish system are summed up by Wakefield in three words, "absentees, agents, middlemen." The agent, in the absence of his employer, often became a tyrant and an oppressor of the worst type. He was known to utilise his position as an intermediary between landlord and tenant for the purpose of deceiving and swindling both parties. Nepotism and corruption were rampant. For example, a perfectly sound tenant might be refused a renewal of his lease unless he was prepared to bribe the

[1] The remarks made here and subsequently in this chapter are generalisations made from the prevailing trend of evidence on the subject. It must always be understood that there were many exceptions to the rule.

agent. Or, again a pack of needy relations might be quartered on the estate, wasting the land and taking the place of better men.

The middleman was a peculiar feature of the times, the result, it would seem, of the lack of capital for agricultural purposes in Ireland. In respect of land he occupied much the same position that the retailer does in modern times with smaller commodities. He took from the landlord a fairly large tract of ground, with the intention of letting it piecemeal to smaller subtenants. The landlord was glad to have only one or two solvent persons to deal with, and to be spared the trouble and annoyance of personal relations with a host of indigent and struggling tenants. The landowners drove the best bargain they could with these middlemen and thereafter troubled themselves very little about the state of their property. The middlemen, in order to make a profit, were more or less obliged to "grind the faces of the poor." Their little fingers were thicker than the loins of the landlords. The landlords could, on occasion, act with generosity and intelligence, but the middlemen seem as a class to have displayed all the cunning, avarice and knavery now to be found, say, amongst the lowest type of professional money-lender. If a tenant fell into arrears, for instance, the middleman might, as a great favour, accept a promissory note instead of the amount due. Of course, this carried exorbitant interest; the tenant was quite unable to pay at the time appointed, and his cattle were dis-

trained for debt. In a short time he was a ruined man, and was evicted from a homestead which, humble as it might be, had perhaps been in his family for generations. It is not to be wondered at that under these circumstances agrarian troubles were frequent.

It has always been so in Ireland. The bitterest contentions, the most deep-seated animosities, owe their origin to agrarian troubles. The land being in many parts of the country the only available means of livelihood, men have at times striven and fought with each other for its possession with all the desperation and recklessness natural to a struggle for the means of existence. The successful parties in such a conflict only gained their object by taking on themselves a burden far greater than they could hope to bear. In their eagerness to obtain the land, they undertook to pay a rent which was far beyond their real capabilities. The "rack rent" might, by dint of tremendous efforts and great personal privations on the tenant's part, be paid for a few years, but sooner or later he succumbed under the strain and was ejected, cherishing to the end of his days a bitter hatred against those persons for whose profit he had fruitlessly endured so much labour and hardship. The sentiment might be unreasonable, but human nature, and especially Irish human nature, being what it is, it was not altogether inexplicable. And again, those who had been crowded out by excessive competition, and excluded from any share in the land, frequently harboured the most vindictive

feelings against their successful rivals. From these two causes alone sprang much of the agrarian disturbances in Ireland. Or again, persons of the tenant class in a particular district might form some sort of combination in order to enforce what they considered to be fair conditions for the renting of land. But the public opinion of the masses, however vehement it might be, could rarely produce any effect unless backed by some stronger influence. Hence these combinations had recourse to petty persecution, intimidation, and mob violence. The landlords, who as magistrates were clothed with all the powers of the law, retaliated with dragoonings and sharp sentences, and so the feud went on all over Ireland. It may easily be realised how such an inflamed state of feeling on both sides hampered and hindered the proper cultivation of the soil.

To realise in all its aspects the life of rural Ireland, it will be necessary to convey the mind back to the days of feudalism. There is the same absolute dependence of the vassal on the lord. Irish landlords were so sure of their tenants' obedience that they used to drive them in mobs to the poll, knowing well that, whatever their sentiments might be, they dare not record a vote against a candidate who had received landlord approval. "Neither Popery, sedition or democracy," says Lord Longueville, a County Cork magnate, "could stand one hour's poll against my friends."[1]

[1] Letter of Oct. 11, 1795.

And besides the slavish personal obedience[1] so characteristic of feudalism, there was the feudal idea of "services" to be rendered by the vassal to the lord. Most leases contained a clause by which the tenant was obliged to render so many days' labour to his landlord, either gratis or at a wage much below the ordinary rate. At certain seasons they had to present "duty fowl," and so on. This was especially the case with the class known as cottiers, or labourers.

There were so many "services" to be set against wages that when the accounts were balanced they had no money to draw. For example, a cottier might hire a cabin and a patch of potato land at a rate of thirty shillings per annum. Then, as milk was almost a necessity of life, he would usually contract for the keep of a cow. At the same time he would have to work for his landlord, when called on, at fivepence a day, and his wages being set off against his rent and the grazing of the cow, he would find himself at the end of the year as penniless as if he had been a negro in an American plantation. It was really a "truck" system, the wages being paid in kind, not in money, partly, of course, because of the inadequacy of the currency, but partly, it is to

[1] Some landlords, it appears, exercised without opposition a privilege of choosing temporary partners for themselves among the female relations of their tenants. As even the poorest Irish peasant has a high standard of honour in such matters, his fear of his landlord must have been great indeed to induce him to submit to such an indignity.

be feared, because a practice of this nature lent itself to the fleecing of the more helpless members of the community. Thus the cottier toiled for a bare subsistence for himself and his family; he seldom saw or handled money. How could a man in his condition save money or raise himself out of the slough into which he was born?

There were numerous survivals of a period earlier than the feudal. In the western districts a large part of the country was held in much the same manner as it had been in tribal times. The chief men of a village, forming a partnership, took a certain amount of land on lease, all the tenants becoming jointly responsible for the rent. The land was then divided into two parts, one for pasture, the other for tillage. The former was held in common, each tenant grazing as many beasts as his share would entitle him to. The land for tillage was subdivided into a number of small separate lots, a certain number of which, not necessarily or even usually coterminous, were assigned to each partner. Periodically the cultivated strips were abandoned to pasture again and the grazing ground broken up. This involved necessarily a fresh distribution and assignment of the arable lots. Disputes were decided by a kind of court composed of the elders of the village. Some of these "rundale" associations were of great antiquity; the original shares had passed from father to son many times, and had in some cases even been divided equally amongst

a number of brothers. Such communities were hardly changed from the old tribal villages of western Ireland. The landlord had taken the place held by the chief, but little else had been altered. But, however interesting they might be as relics of the past, they were an obstacle to agricultural improvement. Naturally, no tenant was disposed to labour to improve his portion when, in a few years' time, the inevitable redistribution would deprive him of the result of his efforts. "Rundale," like the system of "services," led to a mere subsistence farming, with a population always on the brink of starvation.

In the north a somewhat better state of affairs prevailed. It is true that the land was much subdivided, but here the people did not depend on one means of livelihood nor on a single crop. The linen-weavers, who were for the most part home workers, had usually a small plot of land attached to their cottages, and were accordingly able to fall back on the land for support when their ordinary handicraft failed to bring in an adequate return. And even in their cultivation of the soil, they had, as it were, a second line of defence. They grew oats as a main crop, but could fall back on potatoes in time of need. However, as is usually the case with men who practise farming as a secondary employment, they were not remarkable for good or careful management of their little properties.

On the whole, the picture of rural Ireland at this time is depressing and unsatisfactory. While, as

has been said, political causes had doubtless a very considerable share in producing this state of things, the Irish people of all classes cannot be absolved of all responsibility. There is an old saying that a nation has the kind of history it deserves. The fate of peoples, like that of men, is never the mere result of external forces. Each community to a certain extent moulds its own destiny. Before Ireland can obtain any degree of success in commerce or production she must practise the elementary industrial virtues of patience and self-control. She must not, as her sons have so frequently done in the past, sell her birthright for a mess of pottage.

If Irish landlords and tenants, possessing, as they do, at least as much sagacity as persons of the same class in Great Britain, had but this virtue of self-control, would they have been tempted for the sake of present advantage to mortgage the whole future course of their lives? Would the country gentleman have left his estate to go to rack and ruin under agents or middlemen, or would the peasant have taken a farm at a rent which he must have known to be impossible? These things do not happen, or but rarely happen, in other happier countries. In Ireland they seem to have been the general rule. No doubt there is much plausible nonsense talked about "national characteristics," but still the fact remains that Irishmen south of the Boyne rarely exhibit the combination of qualities which make for industrial success. They lack the

keen interest in money-making, the sharp eye for a chance of profit, the readiness to submit to sacrifices in the hope of a distant reward, the stubborn endurance of a self-imposed task, which characterise the Englishman, Scotchman, and Ulsterman. This lack of the true commercial spirit partly accounts for Ireland's comparative failure in agriculture as in industry.

Efforts were continually being made, both by the State and by societies or private individuals, to foster Irish development in this quarter. The Irish Parliament towards the close of its existence had set itself to encourage tillage, at first by means of bounties on corn conveyed to Dublin by inland carriage, subsequently by the more usual expedient of an export bounty. The growth of corn certainly increased after the passing of these measures, but though they undoubtedly had a great effect in promoting the production of cereals in Ireland, there were other contributory causes. Great Britain was no longer able to feed herself, and as foreign supplies were excluded owing to the war, Irish growers found they had comparatively near at hand an excellent market for their produce. Perhaps the best proof that the Irish corn trade was not solely the product of the bounties is that it continued to increase long after they had been repealed, and did not receive its death-blow until the repeal of the Corn Laws flung open the British market to foreign corn.

The Imperial Parliament seems to have turned its

attention to land reclamation and improvement of transit arrangements, rather than to the more direct method of bounties and premiums. With this purpose in view it spent money lavishly on the construction of harbours and canals and the establishment of good main roads throughout the country. Also it set on foot a great scheme for an investigation of the bogs of Ireland with a view to their conversion into arable land, a process which had been often successfully carried out on a small scale by the more energetic and enlightened type of landlord.

These Bog Improvement Commissioners seem rather to have set themselves to inquire what improvements might be made than to carry theory into practice by undertaking drainage works on a large scale. They surveyed the boggy districts, made various borings in order to ascertain the depth and nature of the strata underlying the bogs, and collected a great deal of information for the use of any individuals who might be tempted to undertake reclamation schemes. But the State was by no means disposed, especially in war time, to commit itself to such a huge, intricate and possibly unprofitable task as a general drainage scheme. They were willing to assist private effort, but not to take the whole burden on themselves. Private effort, however, is rarely effective in Ireland, and so the bogs remain to this day in their original state. Their only economic advantage is that they supply

the peasantry with a cheap and universally accessible fuel.[1]

This policy of subsidising or assisting private effort was adopted in the case of two societies which had for their aim the development of agriculture and industry. The first and perhaps the more important of these was the Dublin Society,[2] which received an annual grant of £10,000. It concerned itself chiefly with the scientific and experimental side of agriculture. It founded and maintained a Botanic Garden at Glasnevin,[3] and supported a scientific laboratory in Dublin. Lectures on such subjects as Agricultural Chemistry were given under its auspices. Besides such activities as these, it seems to have been anxious to develop old methods of cultivation and introduce new ones that were thought advantageous. In short, its functions were largely educational. Yet there was a more practical side. Premiums were given not only for useful and intelligent suggestions, but also for their successful carrying into effect. As an illustration of the policy of this society it may be mentioned that at one time it was much interested in a project for establishing a manufacture

[1] The defect of peat as a fuel is that it does not give out, bulk for bulk, nearly so much heat as coal. Thus its use involves much labour for carriage and great loss of time. Whereas a house burning coal will require only three or four tons for the winter, one using turf will need many loads, each of which involves a journey for horse, cart and man to and from the bog.

[2] Founded in 1731 "for the improvement of Husbandry, Manufactures, and other useful arts and sciences."

[3] Since taken over by the State.

of straw hats in Ireland, and was investigating the suitability of home-grown straw for the purpose. A plan of this nature made a twofold appeal to the members, for it tended equally to encourage agriculture and foster industry, thus fulfilling two of the objects for which the society was founded.

The Farming Society,[1] which received an annual grant of £5000, was less concerned with theories and discoveries, and more with the actual working operations of agriculture. It exerted itself to improve the breed of cattle, and maintained pedigree sires for that purpose. Periodical shows were held not only in Dublin, but also apparently at Ballinasloe, probably during the great fair, when thousands of farmers resorted to that town to dispose of their cattle. A factory was established with the intention of producing a better class of agricultural implement than the somewhat primitive kinds in general use. An "itinerant agriculturist," or, as he would now be called, a "demonstrator," was despatched into the country in the hope that personal persuasion and ocular proof might induce the intensely conservative Irish farmer to open his mind to new ideas. Altogether this society seems to have been doing useful work, and it is sad to relate that it soon came to an end, chiefly, it would appear, from lack of popular interest. Its membership fell off, its funds ran low, and about 1828 it disappears from the records. Its plan of action was subsequently adopted in some of its main

[1] Founded in 1800.

features by the Dublin Society, which, in agriculture at all events, is now much more practical than speculative. Like the Farming Society, it organised periodical displays, one of which, the great Horse Show, has attained an extraordinary success. And a curious parallel might be drawn, too, between the operations of the Farming Society and those of modern State departments such as the Department of Agriculture and the Congested Districts Board. Truly it is hard to find any feature in modern Irish life which has not had its prototype somewhere or other in the past.

NOTE.—The chief contemporary authorities for the state of Irish agriculture are the books of Wakefield and Newenham, the "Statistical Surveys" of Irish counties undertaken by the Dublin Society, and the Proceedings of that body and the Farming Society. There are also numerous scattered, but in the aggregate important, references in the State Paper Office collections.

CHAPTER IV

THE LIFE OF THE PEOPLE

As it has already been necessary in these pages to make references to the customs and habits of the people in order to explain statements made, perhaps it will be well before going any further to devote a chapter to this topic, so that the reader may have before his mind a general idea of this important section of the subject.

In some respects the task, always a difficult one, of depicting the daily life of a nation is easier in dealing with Ireland than with other countries. For one thing, the population is not divided up into a great number of classes, shading off into each other by fine gradations. There are only a few distinctive types, and accordingly the work of description is rendered much easier.

At the commencement of the nineteenth century in rural Ireland there were only three, or at most four classes. First came the gentry; next, lagging a long way behind them in popular esteem, the well-to-do agriculturists and graziers; thirdly, the small farmers; and finally, at the lowest end of the scale, the cottiers or labourers. In the towns the

lines of demarcation were not so well marked, but still most individuals could be identified as belonging to one of four sections—namely, the merchants and large employers, who held a position analogous to the landed gentry; next the shopkeepers; then the artisans; and finally a dense mass of casual and unskilled labourers. The professional element was not as yet numerous enough to attract much notice. Even in the cities there was little that could really be called a middle class. In the country, although there were of course prosperous individuals not included in the aristocratic caste, they were not of a type to deserve much attention from the student of social organisation. They aped the class above them, particularly in its vices, and spent most of their time in debauchery of an ignorant and brutal kind. Their character is hit off by the nicknames usually bestowed on them. They were "buckeens" (a contemptuous diminutive from "buck") or "half-gentlemen," and seem to have been held in fairly general dislike and derision.

The country gentry at this time were at the commencement of a long period of decadence. Their failings have already been pointed out. They were, like most ruling classes, disposed to be arrogant and tyrannical. They were often extravagant and thriftless, whittling away their princely properties until nothing was left but a dilapidated mansion, its former splendour still discernible amidst the

decay, approached by a row of stumps that had once been an avenue, and surrounded by a few fields of rough pasture. Recklessness, improvidence and dissipation were destined to bring in the immediate future many old families to this pass. The men of this class lived well and denied themselves nothing. Their larders were flooded with the provisions easily and cheaply produced on their estates; their pockets were lined with the rents contributed by a numerous tenantry. They were not without conspicuous good qualities; their courage was tried both at home and abroad, and they were not lacking in intelligence or generosity, but as a class they were on the downward grade. Their carelessness and indolent habits were, as has been shown in the last chapter, slowly eating into the imposing fabric of their prosperity. The next generation was to see an Incumbered Estates Act under which a sixth of the land in Ireland changed ownership.

A great change was to be seen on passing from the rural aristocracy to the proletariat, more noticeable in Ireland than elsewhere, because there was practically no rural middle class of large farmers or substantial yeomen to soften the transition. At the very doors of the largest and most ornate mansions there would often be a collection of miserable hovels, exhibiting a mode of existence in all its details the very reverse of that of their landlord. Here squalor was to be found instead of splendour,

A TYPICAL IRISH CABIN, EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY

For description see p. xx.

extreme poverty instead of wealth, a monotonous and often scanty diet instead of a loaded table.

For instance, the mud-cabin which housed nine-tenths of the people represented about the lowest grade of accommodation possible short of absolute barbarism. Its walls consisted of clay, sometimes compacted with stones and branches of trees where such were available. When a site had been marked out and the position of the four walls traced, the earth for their construction was dug out from the central space which they were to enclose. Thus the floor of the house, which was left in its natural state and seldom or never boarded over, was almost always a foot or more below the level of the ground in its vicinity, and was liable to be flooded. And as the people did not trouble to exclude their domestic animals, it may be imagined that the interior of such a building was highly insanitary. There was no ventilation, unless it was provided by the chimney or the door. Windows, which were troublesome and expensive things to construct, were usually made very small, and were in some cases hermetically sealed from within.[1] There was no ceiling; the bare rafters stretched across from wall to wall, and the roof consisted of thatch in the better class of house and of sods or bog rushes in the poorer.

The essential characteristics of such a dwelling as

[1] Many cabins had no windows at all, and received whatever light and air they needed through the doorway. The door was usually made in two parts, the upper section being seldom closed except at night.

this was its cheapness and its impermanence. There was very little skill required for its construction; the materials were all to hand ready for the digging or the cutting. A cabin could be run up in a week, and the only cost would be the wages of two or three labourers, with perhaps a carpenter. Many poor people had the opportunity, now only granted to a favoured few, of being the architects and builders of their own homes. They gave their labour free, and so their houses cost them nothing except possibly a few shillings for timber for doors and rafters. Thus the increase of population was immensely facilitated. No young couple wishing to get married had to wait for years until a suitable cottage became vacant. The local landlord, desiring to create freeholders who would support him at the polls, was very willing to see the settlement of a new family and the erection of a new homestead on his estate. Even if he built them a house at his own expense, it would cost him no more than £6, a cheap price to pay for a thoroughly docile and reliable voter. And if he should repent of the arrangement it would be easy to evict the tenant and demolish the house.[1] The low standards of the Irish peasantry in the matter of housing and food seem to have been the chief cause of the over-population which received so terrible a check subsequently in the great famine of 1847. They

[1] One reads of landlords removing whole villages in order to improve the view from their hall doors.

were contented with the absolute minimum in both respects, and put no check on the increase in their numbers, despite several warnings received in the shape of periods of scarcity and pestilence, not so calamitous as those of later days, but still, as will be shown, sufficient to have warned the thoughtful of the danger impending.

The dietary and clothing of the rural districts have already been dealt with in a previous chapter. *Mutatis mutandis*, the same tale may be told of the cities. Dublin and Cork, the most important towns of Ireland, were filled with necessitous poor, huddled and crowded together in a way that must have made the worst country cabin seem a veritable paradise. The larger towns, in fact, were as attractive to the poor as to the rich, though of course for a very different reason. When the soil failed to produce an adequate subsistence, the starving peasant trudged to the nearest city in the hope of obtaining employment there, or, in the event of non-success, of being relieved by some charity. At home in such seasons there was neither work nor relief to be had. There was no Poor Law system, and unless the local gentry threw themselves into the breach, there was no agency to succour the afflicted in country districts. Thus, besides their native poor, always numerous enough, the towns were burdened with a host of distressed people from the country, and as a natural consequence there was much overcrowding and privation. The lower

classes of the towns lived for the most part in one-room tenements. A house let out in this way would accommodate at least as many families as it had rooms. Six or eight families might be living under the same roof, each occupying a single room. And there was sometimes an even further subdivision, for the occupier of spacious rooms often diminished his expenses by curtaining off a section of his own apartment and letting the remainder to lodgers. Perhaps the worst evil of the time in this respect were what were known as "lodging cellars." They were to be found in the basement levels of great houses which had been designed for the well-to-do but had undergone a gradual degradation. These large half-underground rooms, originally intended for kitchens and store-rooms, dark, cold, damp, stone-paved and insect-haunted, sheltered scores of miserable beings at a payment of a few pence nightly. They had a most deleterious effect on the health of the community, and were simply hotbeds of infectious disease.

As regards food, the urban poor had a somewhat higher standard than the peasantry, except that the presence of milk in the diet of the latter must have gone far to compensate for its shortcomings in other ways. The staple food in the towns appears to have been bread, the potato being a mere adjunct. Wheaten flour was costly at the time, and it is likely that the bread eaten by the poor was, as it is still in some Continental countries, baked from

some inferior quality, perhaps mixed with oatmeal or other less expensive ingredient. As regards animal food the towns were much better off than the country. The peasantry seldom tasted meat, preferring to send their cattle to the seaports to be slaughtered for export. So the urban population were able to obtain meat at a fairly reasonable rate, especially as certain portions of the animal were not suitable for salting and had to be disposed of locally. The artisans and labourers of the cities also consumed a good deal of the coarser grades of artificially preserved meat, such as dried fish, bacon, salt pork, and the like.

The chief beverage was beer, which, being as yet but lightly taxed, could be procured in fair quality for sixpence a gallon, or three-halfpence a quart.

The usual fuel, both in town and country, was peat. Even at the port of landing, the price of imported coal was prohibitive. In Dublin, for instance, a port most favourably situated for communication with the coalfields of northern England, it was quoted in 1811 at £1 6s. per ton, a price which is higher even in actual coin of the realm than the present figure, and is very much more so if we take into account the difference between the present and the past rate of wages in Ireland. A ton of coal in 1811 would swallow up at least two weeks' wages, whereas now it takes little more than one.

Clothes seem to have been proportionately dearer than at present. This bore more heavily on towns-

men than on the country people, who, as has been pointed out, manufactured their own clothes. Frieze, a rough and stiff woollen fabric used for men's clothing, cost from three to four shillings a yard. At this rate the material for a complete suit would cost about twenty shillings,[1] without making any allowance for payment to the tailor for making it up. Linsey-woolsey for women's dresses cost about half as much as frieze. The urban poor were, on the whole, badly dressed, and often presented a tatterdemalion appearance, owing to their inability to purchase new clothes when badly needed.

In the matter of wages the town had a marked advantage over the country. Unskilled agricultural labour was in some districts rewarded at the rate of only eightpence a day, and nowhere in rural neighbourhoods could a man, unless he practised a special trade, such as that of mason or carpenter, earn more than seven shillings per week. On the other hand, in the towns the minimum wage of unskilled labour was two shillings a day. No doubt the higher cost of living in the towns was the chief cause of this remarkable difference. But even between neighbouring agricultural counties there was often a marked variation in prices and wages. There was not then that facility of intercommunication which tends nowadays to preserve a uniformity in such

[1] The amount used would depend on the width of the piece. It is likely that the small cottage looms were not of a size to weave wide cloth, and so a suit would require at least five or six yards.

matters all over the kingdom. Connaught was the worst off of all the provinces, and was, like most poor countries, compelled to send her sons to serve as hirelings in strange lands. Every summer there was a great migration of labourers from beyond the Shannon to the corn districts of Leinster, and even to Great Britain. These men worked through the harvest time, earning better wages than they could have obtained at home, and with the approach of winter returned to Connaught, with enough money in hand to tide them over that difficult season.

Although it has been necessary to exhibit the seamy side of Irish life very often in these pages, it must not be thought that the land lay under a never-lifting cloud of privation and despondency. The Irishman is never subdued for long by the blows of fate; the country might pass through periods when misery and desolation prevailed on every hand, but nevertheless in the intervals the people found plenty of amusement. Field sports of every kind were much practised, although assemblies for this purpose were generally discouraged and sometimes even prohibited by the authorities, especially after the rebellion. There seems to have been a suspicion in high quarters that such gatherings might be used for the dissemination of seditious principles.[1] Still, despite their disapproval, the young men met to engage in wrestling matches or to play

[1] For instance, in 1805 the Dublin police were much exercised in their minds about the crowds which assembled to play football on Sundays at Cabra.

their native games of football and hurling.[1] These were usually played with such a reckless dash and *abandon* that a keenly fought game was apt to become a general mêlée. And it must be confessed that fighting on a large scale, with formidable weapons, under regular leaders and at times and places appointed beforehand, was at this time a national amusement. It seems abhorrent to modern ideas, but after all a rough game at, say, Rugby football is not far from a free fight. Of course lives were sometimes lost on such occasions, but unless political or personal animosity entered into the quarrel, the weapon adopted by both sides was the shillelagh or cudgel, which stunned, indeed, but did not usually cause death. Still it was on the whole an evil practice. A fight of this kind might be started from pure light-heartedness and exhilaration of spirits, but there was no knowing where it might end or what bitter memories it might leave behind it. The beaten party might break the compact and have recourse to scythes and pitchforks, or even to firearms; perhaps an unlucky blow might kill a popular man, and his friends would cry out for vengeance. There were infinite possibilities of mischief in these encounters, and the constabulary, as soon as they attained to any strength in the rural districts, rightly exerted themselves to suppress all such disorder, being very much assisted in their diffi-

[1] This is much the same game as hockey, only that in Ireland the stick used to propel the ball is of much more formidable proportions than is permitted by the English rules.

cult task by the priests. The great fairs were the centres of disturbance. They afforded a common meeting-ground for the men of a district, and the natural bellicose tendencies of the people were augmented by the intoxication which was an inevitable concomitant of Irish holiday-making. The ancient Donnybrook Fair, being held in the neighbourhood of the city of Dublin, was the best known and perhaps the most tumultuous of all, but similar scenes were enacted all over Ireland.

On turning to the less boisterous class of popular amusements, they will usually be found to contain either a sociable or a gambling element, or sometimes, as in the case of horse-races, a combination of both. Dancing was much practised even in the humblest grades of society, and under conditions which did not lend themselves to this art. At cross-roads in the summer, or in one another's houses in the winter, the young people met and danced for hours to the strains of bagpipes or fiddle. There was sometimes dancing even at wakes, where it must certainly have seemed incongruous, if not unseemly. On a death occurring, it was the custom for the neighbours to resort in large numbers to the afflicted house and, as a mark of respect to the deceased, support the bereaved family in a kind of nightlong vigil over the remains.[1] The most liberal hospitality

[1] The custom of holding "wakes" is now falling into disuse, being discouraged by the Roman Catholic clergy. The body, as soon as possible after death, is coffined and sent to the chapel, where it remains until it is taken away for burial. Thus the "wake" is obviated.

that the circumstances of the family permitted was shown to the visitors, and often a wide latitude was allowed in the way of amusement, especially to the younger people. They played such games as blind man's buff and hunt-the-slipper, and sometimes, as has been said, were allowed to dance in an outhouse as far as possible from the room where the corpse was laid out.

Horse-racing was very popular, but was not conducted on such an elaborate and expensive scale as at present. There were no great money prizes to be won; the stakes were usually raised by local subscription, and rarely exceeded the value of twenty pounds. Horses were not sent from long distances to compete; there was no professional class which depended for its livelihood on such meetings; in fact, in their freedom from regulation and formality the proceedings bore a fairly close resemblance to the smaller "hunt" or "point to point" races of modern times. The Government thought it well to encourage racing as tending to improve the breed of horses suitable for the cavalry, and the "blue riband" of the turf in Ireland was the King's Plate of 100 guineas raced for periodically at the Curragh. There was not much betting on these contests.

But the gambling instinct found another outlet, the great lotteries organised and conducted by the State. These held out far greater possibilities of gain to the adventurous spirit than are ever possible on a racecourse. For instance, even supposing such

long odds as fifty to one obtainable, as they seldom are, on a racecourse, a person who stakes £5 only stands to win £250. In a lottery a £5 ticket might win £20,000—eighty times as much. The tickets were subdivided into small fractions, so as to be within the reach of the poorer classes. A sixteenth share of a ticket could be purchased for a few shillings, and might become value for over £1000. The lotteries found as many clients among the poor as among the rich, and seem to have produced a demoralisation of all classes. They gave rise to a frenzy of gambling and wagering, legal and illegal. There were all sorts of side bets and side lotteries; there was a system of betting on the prospects of certain tickets; a thousand evil practices were carried on. Immediately before the drawing, and during its progress, the offices where tickets were sold presented some of the worst features of Monte Carlo.[1]

The intellectual life of the masses at this time is a fascinating, but somewhat obscure, subject for investigation. It is certain that books and newspapers were not so generally read as they are now. The heavy expense of paper, printing, and binding made books so dear as to place them quite out of the reach

[1] An anonymous letter of protest of the year 1804, addressed to the Castle, describes the lottery offices as being, even on Sunday nights, "full of the lowest description of people, admitted through the back door, to gamble the very clothes off their backs, in consequence of which the pawnbrokers of the city had an overflow of business, unfortunate miserable wretches pledging their last article to bring money to the lotteryman's coffers."

of the poor, while the newspaper, in addition to its mere cost of production, had to pay a heavy stamp duty to the State. Moreover, the prevalence of illiteracy shut out the majority of people from any benefit to be derived from the study of the printed word. At the time of the Union comparatively few newspapers were published in Ireland, and perhaps hardly half a dozen were established on a sound profit-earning basis. Political prints of a wild and scurrilous type sprang up from time to time and vanished after the ephemeral manner of their kind, but even the better class of journals had few subscribers. From the returns of the Stamp Office, it appears that in 1818, although the population of Ireland was probably as large as it is at present, the average weekly circulation of all the Dublin newspapers combined, as shown by the number of stamps issued to them, was only about 30,000.[1] Still there can be no doubt that the newspapers had some influence, especially in the towns, and it may be advisable, therefore, to give some account of their chief characteristics, especially as a very remarkable change seems to have passed over them during the period in question.

At the commencement of the nineteenth century most Irish journals were small in size and meagre in their news supply, most of which was simply copied

[1] The most popular newspapers of the time, the *Freeman's Journal* and the *Correspondent*, only sold 7000 and 5000 copies a week each respectively. Return from Stamp Office, 1818. Thirteen journals in all are mentioned in this list.

verbatim from the London papers. They seem to have had no reporting system even for their own districts, and one of their most annoying features is that while they have long letters from Constantinople or Hamburg, they pass over in silence contemporary events of considerable interest nearer home, which one would think could hardly have escaped their notice.[1] They appeared at intervals of three or four days and were sold at a high price, usually about fivepence a copy. The moral tone of even the better-class papers was singularly low ; some of the anecdotes inserted from time to time were such as would now infallibly attract the attention of the police. And several journals were of that type, most obnoxious of all to persons of intelligence, the thick-and-thin, stick-at-nothing, political hack. The Irish Government subsidised a number of newspapers which, of course, could find nothing but virtue in the actions of the administration, and nothing but treason in those of the opposition. Similarly, there were papers on the other side which poured forth an unceasing torrent of rancour and accusation, and were no doubt supported in some way or another by the party whose interest they defended with such fury. But there was little to elevate or instruct in the periodical press of the day. It was intended, apparently, to manufacture political fanatics of the worst kind.

[1] The *Hibernian Journal* of 29th April 1809 contains nine or ten columns of general news, but devotes only half a column to local affairs.

As the century wears on, however, a remarkable change begins to be noticeable. The commercial, as distinct from the political, possibilities of journalism begin to be exploited. The newer type of editor seems to have recognised that his readers might be anxious to be informed of what was passing around them, without wishing to be perpetually dosed with hot politics.

The news supply, both from home and abroad, is much better; the size of the paper is increased and its price lowered; there is a more moderate and "respectable" tone throughout. Everything points to the conclusion that the newspaper is now appealing to a wider and more intellectual clientele. Moreover, there was a very considerable local extension of press influence; even the small country towns found they could support a modest weekly paper of their own, and there was a steady increase in the number of journals published in Ireland.[1] Two causes seem to have brought about these improvements in Irish journalism—firstly, the great spread of education, which created so many prospective readers and promised so wide a popular support for a good newspaper; and secondly, the removal of the financial difficulties of journalism on account of the development of advertising. Hitherto advertisements had been a mere side-issue;

[1] The establishment of local papers in Ireland was ascribed at the time to O'Connell's influence and his desire to carry his propaganda into all parts of the country.

there were few of them in the regular news sheets, and in some cities they were relegated to special *Advertisers*, which contained announcements of this kind and very little else. Now, however, the advantages of a mutual alliance between the advertisements and the news section began to be realised, and the profits of the former went to widen the scope and ensure the reliability of the latter. The extent of the change may be realised by comparing, say, the *Hibernian Journal* of 1809 with the *Saunders' Newsletter* of 1830.

The theatre, too, was well patronised, not only in Dublin but also in the provincial cities. Here illiteracy was no bar, and the poorer classes thronged the cheaper seats nightly, and vied with the wealthier patrons in their eagerness to recognise and reward talent. Under these favourable circumstances, Ireland seems to have become in a sense a school for the training of future leaders of the London stage. The only defect of the Irish audience was its occasional tendency to turbulent outbreaks, especially at times of political excitement.

Another feature of the times was the system of lecturing, which seems to have played quite an important part in popular education. In several of the larger towns various organised bodies, as, for instance, the Dublin Society or the Cork Institution, arranged for courses of public lectures to be delivered by their professors. The subject-matter of these discourses was not, as it would be nowadays, in-

tended chiefly to amuse and only incidentally to instruct. On the contrary, they seem to have been on rather recondite subjects, and treated as part of an educational course. At Belfast, for example, the programme of this department of the Academical Institution extended to such subjects as Mineralogy, Geology, Chemistry, and Belles Lettres, and it appears to have been in contemplation to add Political Economy and Botany to the list. In the absence of a proper history of education in Ireland, it is not possible to estimate the effects produced by such lectures on the unlettered and unlearned masses, but it is likely that they occupied a position not unlike that now held by the technical schools.

As regards the intellectual life of rural districts it is not easy to make any definite statements.

Until the rise of the Kildare Place Society and similar associations, schools were not numerous, and illiteracy was almost universal. Therefore books and newspapers need hardly be taken into account. Furthermore, there was the difficulty of language. The vernacular throughout the greater part of the country was Irish—not, it would seem, a pure and homogeneous language, but broken up into a dozen local dialects, differing widely in vocabulary and pronunciation.[1] There was no extant literature in this tongue, even if the people had been able to read

[1] There is a very curious reference in one letter to men speaking "Fingallian," apparently the dialect of Fingal or North County Dublin. It is remarkable to find a dialect persisting so near the capital. Letter of J. Rawson, August 20, 1803.

it. Here and there in libraries and antiquarian collections were to be found ancient Irish manuscripts, the remains of a vanished culture, but of course the average peasant knew nothing of such things. The wide field of English literature was closed to him, both by his lack of education and his ignorance of that tongue, and there was no available literature in Irish. Accordingly he had recourse to the usual mental pabulum of an illiterate but intelligent and imaginative people, the ballad and the half-historical legend.

There was a class of professional ballad-singers and story-tellers, who were always sure of a seat by the fire and a place at the table wherever they went. These provided the chief mental relaxation of the countryside, and Ireland, having for quite two centuries been limited to these special forms of intellectual activity, attained a very high level in both. The ancient ballads are remarkable for the simple beauty of their structure and their wonderful power of expressing every kind of feeling and emotion. And similarly, many Irish traditions and legends exhibit a high degree of what may be called literary craftsmanship.

But the development of an educated public after the Union soon brought forth ability in other directions. The Irish novelist and the Irish poet, whose work had hitherto attained only a parochial celebrity, now wrote for a far wider circle of readers. Moore, Carleton, Lover, and Lever were all the offspring

of this period; and though they wrote as much for the English as for the Irish public, still they were native-born authors, writing with all the knowledge and sympathy of a native on Irish subjects, and as such commended themselves to their fellow countrymen. They formed, as it were, the portal through which the nation entered into a domain from which it had long been debarred, and received their reward in the grateful remembrance of at least two generations of Irishmen.

The entry of the State into the province of popular education was a natural outcome of its relations with the individual in other respects. Either for its own benefit or for that of the people generally, the Irish Government was intervening in a dozen ways in the life of the poorer classes. To the former cause may be ascribed the harsh and hardly justifiable police regulations issued from time to time, especially in season of disturbance. The laws against "combinations" or trade unions were, as has been shown, extremely severe. And besides these, there was a regular code dealing with the treatment of aliens and "suspects." A country magistrate could arrest any person whom he chose to consider a suspicious character and hold him in prison, unless respectable bail was offered for his good behaviour. During the war a kind of "spy fever" raged among the officials of Ireland, and the records are full of mistakes made and hardships inflicted through excess of zeal in this direction. For

various reasons there was always a number of people to be found tramping along the roads from place to place, and any one of these, when he entered a town, might come under the eye of the magistrate and be promptly arrested as a "suspect." As a rule, too, being necessarily strangers, they could find no one to go bail for them, and in those days of slow communications might have to remain a week in confinement before they could get a certificate of good character from their native place. No doubt spies and rebel agents were sometimes caught, but usually the "suspect" proved to be a most innocent person. Sometimes it was a "poor scholar" travelling in search of education, or a pilgrim on his way to some shrine, or again a shipwrecked sailor trying to reach his home, or a scientist bent on geological investigations. The net was spread wide and brought up a very strangely assorted collection.[1] Of a similar character were the sharp restraints on aliens who came into the country. They were literally passed along from one magistrate to another, and had to report themselves and show their certificates

[1] Among other persons detained in this way were two Turks, who were apparently Freemasons, for their petition is headed by a rude drawing of the familiar masonic emblem of the compass and set-square. According to their own story, they had gone on a trading journey from Aspahan to Marseilles, and lost their ship and merchandise in a storm in the Mediterranean. Returning to Turkey, they and their families, sixteen persons in all, were thrown into prison by their creditors. At last they obtained permission to sail to France again, to borrow money from their correspondents there in order to retrieve their fortunes; but they

on demand, like so many convicts released on ticket-of-leave. At one time, too, passports were required even for British subjects who crossed the Irish Sea from one country to the other.

But if the State showed an unwelcome activity in some directions, it must be remembered that it showed a great interest in the moral and physical welfare of its subjects in other quarters—often in matters where its intervention did really more harm than good. For instance, the Assize of Bread, which was intended to save the poor from being over-charged for the chief necessity of life, was easily evaded by the bakers and millers and turned to their own private advantage. Again, the State maintained in Dublin and Cork public coal yards, in order to be able to supply those cities with fuel when long-continued contrary winds prevented the coal vessels from reaching Ireland. These yards cost a good deal to stock and to maintain, and were only rarely called on. Meanwhile it was found that the coal disappeared by petty theft and embezzlement, and when the time of dearth came the coal yards were not able to come to the rescue. Eventually, either because of their cost or because the

found on reaching Marseilles that the Revolution had taken place in the meantime, and that their friends, so far from being able to help them, had either perished on the guillotine or were themselves bankrupts or fugitives. So the Turks were drifting about Europe begging their bread as they went. Compare also the adventures of the Sieur de Latocnaye while on a walking tour in Ireland, as related in article entitled "Old Irish Travel" (*Blackwood's Magazine*, September 1909).

certainty of steam communication had rendered such special provisions unnecessary, the coal yards were abolished.

Again, the State intervened in seasons of distress to tide the poor over their time of need. There were several occasions in this period when such assistance became absolutely necessary. The first was in the years 1800 and 1801, when a poor yield of potatoes coincided with a scarcity of other provisions. Prices were so high that the poor could not buy, and were in danger of starving. In this emergency the Government procured a considerable amount of rice, maize, and rye meal and had it consigned to various ports in Ireland, where it was disposed of, either to the distressed people themselves or to local committees who could be trusted not to make a profit out of retailing. At the same time, in order to encourage individual effort, it was given out that Government would contribute to the relief fund raised in any neighbourhood an amount equal to one-third of the private subscriptions. Soup-kitchens were established at the chief centres, especially where there happened to be already in existence a House of Industry or a Charitable Society accustomed to this class of work.

The next call was made in 1817 during the period of distress which gave rise to the great typhus epidemic. This time, however, the Government embarked on a different policy, chiefly influenced by the fact that the dearth was more or less localised

and did not extend to the whole of Ireland.[1] They brought from England cargoes of oats and potatoes so that there might be sufficient for seed for the new crop, and, as before, they augmented private subscriptions with small grants from the Exchequer. But at the same time they adopted a system of relieving distress by giving employment.[2] £250,000 was set aside by Parliament for the purpose. Great public works like Kingstown Harbour were pushed forward as much as possible, and the relief committees and private individuals were encouraged to act similarly in their own spheres. From a very interesting report sent in by the parish of Kilpeacon, County Kilkenny, it appears that the adult poor there were employed during the period of distress in cutting and carrying turf from a large bog, repairing a bad road, and constructing fences, while the children were set weeding and rooting up thistles. The wages were paid in meal, not in money, and the time of stress was tided over at a cost to the parish of £48, £30 of which was defrayed by a grant from the Lord Lieutenant.[3] It is remarkable that the populace bore this famine, if it could be so described, much less patiently than they had borne that of 1800–1801, which had been much more severe. There were riots whenever it was proposed to send provisions, especially potatoes, from one part

[1] The north was the quarter most afflicted.

[2] The distress after the peace was largely due to the overcrowding of the labour market by disbanded soldiers and sailors.

[3] Letter of W. Percival, Sept. 29, 1817.

of the country to another. Munster, though she had a surplus crop, was not willing to assist Ulster. Canal-boats carrying supplies were stopped and plundered on the way. Carts were held up on the road by great mobs and robbed of their contents.

Five years later there was local distress, this time on the western and south-western seaboard, owing to a failure in the potato crop. This, however, did not give much difficulty, as the facility of sea carriage rendered it possible to bring cheap provisions into the afflicted districts. The main points of the policy then pursued were, according to an official memorandum: (1) to avoid the gratuitous distribution of food; (2) to relieve by employment where possible, and, if at all feasible, to bring the work to the people rather than to take them out of their own neighbourhood; (3) to give low wages; (4) to insist on *bona fide* work.[1] The third rule was much disliked by the people, and led, strange as it may seem when the plight of the labourers is considered, to occasional strikes.

Besides these special and temporary provisions, there were in several of the towns permanent organisations for the relief of poverty, deriving most of their support from State funds. The Houses of Industry, as they were called, were originally established with a twofold purpose—firstly, to support the aged and infirm; and secondly, to

[1] Memorandum of Committee for Relief of the Poor, May 16, 1822.

punish the dissolute and wilfully idle. The former class were admitted voluntarily, the latter, which included "sturdy beggars" of the male sex and "disorderly persons" of the female, were sent to these places as a punitive measure. But in the absence of a general poor-law, the Government policy with regard to the Houses of Industry varied very widely from time to time. This may be illustrated by a reference to the Dublin institution, which was the largest and most important of them all. In 1816, when there was much distress and privation, the "sturdy beggars" and "unfortunate" women were ejected to make room for a new class, the "destitute and deserving." It seemed a hard thing that the House of Industry should shelter and maintain within its walls the dissipated or worthless character while honest people might be starving outside. Accordingly the deserving poor were admitted, with the result that by the following year this class alone amounted to over seven hundred souls, and, if the Governors had admitted all that applied, would soon have reached double or treble that number. But now the authorities, realising whither their policy was leading them, began to shrink from recognising the principle that the poor of every class had an absolute right to relief at the hands of the State. It was generally felt that a poor law was becoming necessary, but it was not deemed either wise or politic to lay such an enormous burden on the Houses of Industry. By the year 1824 the

"destitute and deserving" class has disappeared, and the House seems to have resumed its original functions as a home for the afflicted and place of correction for the erring. But this reversal to the old state of things did not permanently diminish the total number of inmates, which in the year just mentioned was well over two thousand.

In fact, the House of Industry was fast attaining the dimensions of a modern Union workhouse. The buildings under its control comprised medical and surgical hospitals, usually containing from four to six hundred patients, a penitentiary for young offenders, a small lunatic asylum, and "homes" for destitute children and for the aged or infirm. It was not popular with the poor, and was probably not intended to be so. The paupers never tasted meat. Bread, buttermilk, soup, potatoes, and "kalecannon" (a strange compound of potatoes, cabbage, leeks, butter, milk, and various other ingredients worked up into a sort of mash) were their staple diet. And naturally the appointments were not luxurious; most of the inmates slept two in a bed, some even three, while a certain proportion were not given a bedstead at all and had to lie on the floor. Still, taking into consideration the general habits of the period, it must be admitted that the institution was carefully and humanely managed. Whenever a time of stress came—as, for instance, when famine or pestilence descended on the city—the House of Industry rose to the occasion and did excellent service in tending

and feeding hordes of unfortunate people. Not all public money was spent so well as the £20,000 or £25,000 which it annually cost the State.

There were several charities in existence of which as much could not be said, among others the notorious Foundling Hospital. The percentage of deaths among the wretched infants belonging to this institution was truly horrifying. Even the practice of sending the children to be "boarded out" in the country did not arrest the mortality. In 1805, out of 2102 children admitted, 440 died out of hand in the Dublin nursery; 1637 were sent to the country, where 755 of them died; and another 400 were lost sight of.[1] Only 466 could be definitely reckoned on as having passed safely through the dangerous period of infancy. More than three-fourths of the original 2000 had perished. In 1797 it had been worse, for in that year only 67 survived out of 764, or less than one in ten. It would have been more humane to have thrown these babies in the Liffey at once than to have let them be slowly done to death by incompetent nurses and neglectful foster-mothers.

[1] The hardships of the journey accounted for some of these "missings." They perished on the way and were never heard of again. See Letter and Return from Foundling Hospital, May 28, 1818.

CHAPTER V

RELIGION

PERHAPS one of the chief reasons of the regrettable prominence of religious strife in Irish history is to be found in the undoubted depth and fervour of Irish feeling in such matters. There are no Gallios in the nation. Whether a man is a Protestant or a Catholic, he is usually a convinced and sincere believer in his own creed, and his ardour for the advancement of one form of belief frequently leads him to attacks on others. The zealot becomes a missionary, and on occasion a persecutor. Naturally, too, the same enthusiasm which causes one set of men to endeavour to propagate their own faith evokes a determined and passionate resistance from the party attacked. Hence have arisen those bitter contentions which have so often arrested the advance of progress and toleration in Ireland, and although the subject is not a pleasant one, the historian will be blinking essential facts if he does not devote some portion of his space to religious history. It will be well to deal with the various denominations in their order, beginning first with the Church of Ireland, "as by law established,"

going on to the Presbyterians and other Protestant dissenting churches, and concluding with the Roman Catholic, which, as comprising by far the most numerous section of the population, was perhaps the most important of all.[1]

As regards mere material prosperity, the Established Church was easily foremost. It enjoyed all the prestige of connection with the State; its revenues were large, its endowments magnificent; it possessed many ancient and stately buildings. For centuries the successive governments of Ireland had been doing everything in their power to favour its advancement. Its rivals, the Presbyterian and Catholic churches, had been subjected to discouragement and persecution. Public money had, as in the well-known case of the Charter Schools, been poured out like water to win converts for the State religion.[2] It had practically a monopoly of education, at all events of the better sort, from Trinity College down to the parish school. A special board, the First Fruits Commissioners, was maintained in order to assist, by loan or otherwise,

[1] It will be understood that this chapter is not a history of the several churches, but a study of their relations with the State and with each other.

[2] These schools received Roman Catholic children from their parents and gave them free board and education on condition of their being brought up as Protestants. They were scandalously mismanaged; the children were subject to "scaldhead" and scrofulous diseases produced by dirt and neglect, and their intellectual and moral condition was on a par with their physical state.

in the building and upkeep of churches and parsonages and the purchase of glebe lands. In 1813 parliamentary grants of £58,000 were issued for this purpose.[1] Moreover, the head of the Church was entrusted with a large share in the work of government. To the Primate, the Lord Chancellor, and the Commander-in-Chief, as "Lords Justices," was usually assigned the management of affairs during the absence of the Lord Lieutenant. Practically all the upper and a good proportion of the middle class were members of the Episcopal Church, so that it contained a greater share of the wealth and intelligence of the country than a mere census of numbers would show.

Still, despite this fair outward seeming, its position was essentially unsound. It took on itself the attributes of a national church while being really the church of a minority. Perhaps if it had confined itself to mere assertion there would have been no desire to challenge its claim; but it went much further. As a State church, it exercised a right to tax all subjects indiscriminately for its support, regardless of whether they belonged to its fold or not. Furthermore, its taxes were levied in such a way as to be inequitable and burdensome, especially to the poor. Its proctors entered into every homestead, searching for certain kinds of agricultural produce which were liable to a tenth part or tithe for the support of the Church. It may be imagined

[1] Account of Board of First Fruits, 1813.

how such a visitor would be welcomed, especially by those who did not belong to the church for whose benefit they were taxed. Many parishes, owing to the lack of Protestant inhabitants, were an absolute sinecure for their incumbents, who nevertheless drew hundreds of pounds from tithes levied on the Roman Catholic and Presbyterian population. Furthermore, the clergy did not see to this sordid monetary business personally, but transacted it through deputies and subordinates, who, as such persons always will do unless supervised, oppressed the people for their private advantage.

Moreover, owing to certain exemptions that were allowed, the tithe did not fall on all equally, but came with extra severity on those who could least afford it. It was not leviable, for instance, on the produce of grazing or dairy farms, but on tillage. Thus a farmer who possessed many cows or bullocks came off scot-free, while the poor peasant, who grew a small crop of oats or potatoes for the subsistence of his family, had to resign himself to the disappearance of a considerable part of his year's stock of provision. It hardly needed the eloquence of an O'Connell to fan popular resentment against such a system into a flame. Throughout the period there was a sullen discontent which, as usually happens in Ireland, broke out occasionally into acts of lawlessness and barbarity. The agents or "tithe-proctors," as they were called, who actually collected these dues, were sometimes fearfully maltreated. Like

the gaugers and preventives, they had to do their work under a strong escort, and had to run the risk of torture, mutilation, and murder. A Church founded on injustice could not stand.

Internally, too, the Establishment was in a state of corruption and disorder. The same intriguing and place-hunting that went on in the Civil Service was reproduced in the Church. The correspondence of the Lords Lieutenant contains hundreds, nay, thousands, of letters from aspirants to preferment. And if this style of letter is nauseating even in secular affairs, it is doubly so in religious matters. If a bishop or a dean lay dying, nay, if he were seriously ill, Dublin Castle was besieged with applications for his place. The authorities, too, do not seem to have considered themselves under any obligation to select men of distinguished piety or learning to fill these vacancies. Often they were given as a reward for political services. There were Union bishops as well as Union peers. The consequences were that persons, whose character and previous history were by no means edifying, reached a bound high station in the Church, while the more Christian type of cleric was completely passed over. On one occasion the Primate deemed it his duty to resign as a protest against the appointment of an improper person to a vacant seat. By the tactful handling of Hardwicke he was induced to reconsider his decision, yet, despite their knowledge of the archbishop's disapproval, the Government persisted in their original design. An

amusing anonymous letter of the year 1800 attacks this kind of "job." "B——'s peerage," it says, "is an indecency only to be equalled by making that swindler M—— a Revenue Commissioner, or that profligate dog, young Dean B——, a bishop." By no stretch of imagination could any dean or bishop of the present Church of Ireland be described as a "profligate young dog." And even as regards the rank and file of the Church there was a general demoralisation. Many of the incumbents did not trouble themselves about their parochial duties, but went off to Bath or Clifton to live in comfort on their stipends, leaving a poorly paid curate to attend to the Church and parishioners. The ecclesiastical buildings of Ireland, many of which were both ancient and beautiful, were allowed to fall into dilapidation through sheer lack of proper care, and it may safely be inferred that the congregations fared as badly as the buildings in which they worshipped, and that religion fell into disrepute. It must not be too hastily concluded that the Church of Ireland was nothing but one great imposture from end to end. There were good and pious men in all its grades, but it is necessary to point out that there was also a strong leavening of an entirely different type, and the presence of the bad, or even the indifferent, must have gone far to discredit and counteract the efforts of the good.

In this, however, as in so many other respects, the Union seems to have brought about a beneficial

change. The political clerics were mostly bitter enemies of Catholic Emancipation, and their opponents were glad to turn the tables on them by directing the attention of the Imperial Parliament to the numerous scandals of the Irish Church. Never before had there been such a call for returns and reports calculated to reveal the worst features of its organisation. The proportion of non-resident to resident clergy in each diocese, the number of Protestant inhabitants in the well-endowed rural incumbencies, the state of ecclesiastical buildings—these and a hundred similar weak points were made the subject of searching investigation. Inquiries were held and special commissions were nominated. The result was a distinct revivification of the Church. The authorities found it necessary to be much more careful when making their appointments. The newer class of dignitary was naturally much more conscientious than the old. The bishops hastened to set their dioceses in order, lest commissioners should be appointed to do it for them. Residence and personal attention to duty were enforced upon the minor clergy. Altogether the thirty years which followed the Union saw an immense improvement in the general tone of the Church.

It is not so easy to form an opinion as to the internal condition of the Presbyterian communion as it is in the case of the Establishment, which, from its close connection with the State, figures prominently in official records. The details required for

this purpose are probably to be found only in the possession of that Church itself. However in one important point they came in contact with Government. Ulster, the stronghold of Presbyterianism, had, as is well known, been honeycombed with disaffection in 1797 and 1798, and in some cases the ministers of that religion had taken a prominent part in fomenting rebellion. Dublin Castle was anxious, therefore, to acquire some sort of restraining power over a class which had shown itself so influential and troublesome. Similar motives were prompting it at the same time to cultivate relations with the Catholics. The plan proposed in both cases was the same, the indirect endowment of the religion by paying its priests or ministers. It succeeded with the Presbyterians; it went within a little of being successful with the Catholics. In fact, only for O'Connell's resistance, the bishops would probably have entered into a concordat with the Government, either as to the payment of clergy by the State or a State veto on episcopal appointments.

The method adopted in the case of the Presbyterians was an augmentation of the Regium Donum, an ancient royal benefaction of trifling amount bestowed on the Presbyterian clergy. This was in the year 1803 raised to £14,000, which, being shared among 186 congregations, worked out at an average of about £75 per minister.[1] In return, the Crown was to have a power of refusing its bounty

[1] Letter of W. Wickham and enclosures, June 22, 1803.

to any minister whom it considered to be of seditious and disloyal principles. The terms seem to have been gladly accepted, and the end aimed at by Government was fully attained. By 1805, as it appears from a jubilant letter to Government, there were only two disloyal characters in the Assembly.[1]

It would, however, be unfair to ascribe this change of feeling among the ministry solely to monetary considerations. Part of it must undoubtedly be attributed to the sudden and complete revulsion of feeling which swept over Ulster after 1798 and turned it from a "sink of rebellion," as it is styled by one correspondent, into the most loyal and steadiest part of Ireland.

Methodists, too, do not figure much in the records, save in so far as their strong evangelising tendencies brought them into conflict with the people. As followers of Wesley and Whitefield, they felt themselves impelled to conduct open-air missions and preachings, a course which, in Catholic districts, inevitably led to disorder and tumult. Their "Calvary preachers" wandered over the country, preaching in Irish and English, and meeting, it would seem, with but indifferent success.

The Quakers, too, should not be passed over, if only for their kindness of heart. They seem to have been very much respected, and their scruples as to taking oaths and engaging in military service received special consideration. As their religious

[1] Letter of Dr. R. Black, May 30, 1805.

observances were of a quiet and personal nature, they did not come into collision with any section of the populace. In every movement for the amelioration of the human lot, they took a leading part. In such matters, for instance, as prison reform, the mitigation of the criminal law, the relief of distress, the spread of popular education, the Society of Friends showed itself worthy of its self-chosen name, and did better work in proportion to its size than any other religious organisation.

On coming to Catholicism the historian is confronted by a wealth of material. Throughout the period the problem of the treatment of the Catholics is much before the mind of every one connected with administration. Accordingly almost every letter and report contains some sort of reference to their practices and their aims, and from this abundance of matter it is comparatively easy to give a picture of the general state of that faith.

The first feature to impress the observer of religious affairs at the beginning of the century is the remarkable timidity and helplessness of the Catholics. No doubt this is largely the result of a century of persecution; "the iron had entered into the soul" of many Irishmen. And besides, though the burden had been lightened, it had not been wholly removed. There were still a good many provisions in the law calculated to remind the Roman Catholic of his inferior position. For instance, his bishops were not permitted to assume ecclesiastical titles belonging to

Protestant sees, although such were accorded them by popular usage. Officially a bishop not belonging to the Established Church was to be known as Dr. ——, or as the "titular" Bishop of ——. The prelates accepted this situation with more humility than might have been expected; there is on record a letter from Dr. Troy, "titular" Archbishop of Dublin, rather anxiously disclaiming any wish to be styled "My Lord."[1] Again, priests were subjected to severe penalties if they celebrated marriage between persons both of whom were not of their own communion. The "mixed marriage," which frequently leads to the conversion of one party to the religion of the other, was to be solemnised, if at all, under the auspices and influence of the Established Church. During the rebellion chapels had often been treated with scant respect; many had been burned down.[2]

Yet on the whole, though outwardly the attitude of contempt and dislike is not softened, still the authorities seem, little by little, to be embarking on a different policy. They recognise the futility of trying to keep three fourths of the population in a state of inferiority, and even though many years pass before they can make up their minds to grant political emancipation, still they seem to be trying to get in touch with the Catholics and act more fairly towards them. There were many manifestations of this policy.

[1] Letter of Dec. 24, 1798.

[2] Compensation was afterwards paid on this head.

In the first place, the State gradually shook off its proselytising tendencies, and assumed an impartial attitude to all religions. It began to appoint to its institutions chaplains of all the more important denominations, and ceased to show its former desire to convert to Protestantism every Catholic that came under its influence. Furthermore, it cultivated friendly relations with the Roman Catholic clergy, seeing their rising influence with their flocks, and hoping to win over first the priests and then their congregations. These overtures were well received on the whole, and for at least the first five years of the century there was a sort of understanding, if not an alliance, between the Roman Catholic Church and the Government. Its existence is evinced by the Catholic support of the Union, the amicable tone of the letters which passed between the Lords Lieutenant and some of the bishops, and also by the timely warnings of intended disturbance received from certain of the parish priests. Of course, Nationalists of to-day will consider this absolute treachery on the part of their clergy, but in doing so they are omitting to take into account the true circumstances of the case, and judging the past too much by the present. The rebellious party in Ireland was undoubtedly inspired by the principles of the French Revolution, which in their country of origin had led to an outburst of infidelity and a spoliation of the Catholic Church. Many of the Irish priests had been at college in France in 1789, and had

naturally acquired an utter aversion to Jacobinism of every sort. The United Irishman had far too much of the Jacobin about him to please this type of priest, who accordingly was quite ready, if not eager, to aid the settled government against the revolutionary. If Emancipation had been conceded, as Pitt seems to have intended, soon after the passing of the Union, this temporary alliance might have become a permanent one, with the result that the country would have been spared the three decades of angry political warfare which supervened.

However, with each denial of their demands, the anger of the Catholics against the obstructing Government grew greater, and it was no longer possible to maintain friendly communications. The priests who began to come from Maynooth were of a different stamp from those educated abroad; they felt their distinctive nationality and resented the disabilities of their religion much more strongly than had their more cosmopolitan predecessors, and both of these feelings drove them into opposition to the Government. Even as early as 1802 Lord Redesdale, the Chancellor, adverts to the existence of two parties among the priests, one favourable to the Government, the other bitterly hostile.[1] But as O'Connell's influence increased, the former party grew weaker and weaker, until finally it became negligible. One of the most remarkable features of the Liberator's career is his use of his Church as a great political

[1] Letter of April 23, 1802.

organisation. The funds for the support of his policy were collected at the chapels, the subscriptions being much stimulated by addresses from the altar. There was even a certain amount of pressure brought to bear on unwilling parishioners. In some cases, too, the priests led or drove the voters to the polls, in much the same way as the landlords had been wont to do. As a body the clergy flung themselves wholeheartedly into the conflict on O'Connell's side, and used on his behalf all the suasion, both moral and physical, that they could command.

This was the first, and perhaps the most impressive, demonstration of the political power of the priest in Ireland. It is curious to read the astonishment and dismay of the landlords when they saw their tenants openly voting against them. It is almost as if their horses had refused to pull for them, or their dogs to hunt. Like many ruling classes, they had, for the most part, been blind to the fact that the sceptre was slowly, but none the less surely, passing from their hands. The priests had long exercised a remarkable personal authority over their flocks,[1] but, until the Catholic Emancipation movement came into being, they had not used their influence to effect political ends. They were as yet too timid, too much

[1] In "matters of faith and morals," some of the clergy ruled their parishes with a rod of iron. Their despotism may have been benevolent in its intentions, but despots they certainly were. One reads, for instance, of them flogging prostitutes and driving them away by sheer terrorism from the neighbourhood. No doubt such women were a source of demoralisation, but it is not pleasant to think of any man, much less a minister of religion, plying his whip on a woman's back.

afraid of a renewal of persecution. But the lapse of time and a growing consciousness of their own strength brought greater boldness, which manifested itself finally in a successful challenging of the political ascendancy of the landlords.

As regards the relations of the two great religions to each other, it is not altogether easy to speak. In some places there was quite an amicable understanding; at others there was what might be called an "armed truce"; at others, again, a continual bickering which broke out occasionally into serious contentions. Irish Protestantism was decidedly too Puritan [1] and Evangelical in its general tone to settle down quietly beside Catholicism. It must needs be making converts, a practice which never fails to arouse the bitterest hostility of the injured church. Although the State soon ceased to lend its aid in this direction, wealthy and zealous individuals organised various societies to effect the same end. The offer of free education was a favourite device for bringing Catholics within the reach of Protestant influence. Bibles and Prayer-books were distributed to the peasantry by colporteurs, and preachers were sent out, most of whom, in order to get into closer touch with the people, delivered their sermons and read their

[1] Among other instances of this tendency may be noted its rigid Sabbatarianism and its occasional hostility to the theatre. One country magistrate obstructed the traffic of half a county by prohibiting wheeled vehicles from passing through Navan on Sunday. Curiously enough, one result of his action was that many people could not reach their churches in time for service. *Cf.* also the case of the Sligo theatre (p. 205).

extracts from Scripture in the Irish tongue. Again, the chaplains to the institutions sometimes used their positions for proselytising purposes, which, of course, provoked a violent outcry and a demand for an inquiry. It may be imagined how edifying it was for the inmates of, say, the House of Industry or the Richmond Penitentiary to see the pastors of the hostile faiths at bitter enmity with each other. At one of the prisons certain convicts seem to have deliberately stirred up strife between the minister and the priest by inclining first to one religion, then to the other. No doubt the ensuing quarrel was a great enlivenment of the monotony of prison life. Another outcome of this controversial and missionary spirit was seen in the public disputations which from time to time took place between prominent leaders on either side. These gave rise to a good deal of excitement. The contest was apt to degenerate into mere rhetoric and abuse. Both sides, of course, claimed the victory, but very seldom did those wordy wars lead to the conviction of any one, unless possibly for a breach of the peace. They were the intellectual equivalent of a faction fight, and seem to have had much the same effect in intensifying party and religious distinctions, and leaving behind them a legacy of spite and hatred to trouble future generations.

It cannot be said that the Protestants, eager as they were to convert the Catholics, made any great endeavour to understand their feelings. They made but little attempt to study the religion they were

attacking, and perhaps this circumstance alone would go far to account for the futility of their efforts. They lived in a complete alienation of mind from the Catholics, and when a Protestant comes to describe some particular feature of Catholic life, he does so in much the same detached, uncomprehending, unsympathetic tone as a Christian traveller might use when speaking of Mohammedans or Buddhists. Prejudice often made up for lack of knowledge. This naturally led to bad administrative blunders, which caused much resentment. Foreign priests collecting alms were arrested as spies. A "scapular" fell into the hands of the authorities and gave rise to much suspicion. A magistrate in Cork was inclined to see political, if not treasonable, motives in the crowds that flocked to a "jubilee" in the North Chapel.

The same prejudice led to a tacit, but not the less effective, handicapping of the Catholic in various walks of life. The Protestants strove to maintain their dominant position in commercial life and public affairs by excluding Catholics from the charmed circle. They refused to appoint any person who held a religion they disliked and despised to positions in their gift. Even when the State began to be tolerant, there was no similar spirit among its chief officials. "No Catholic need apply" was the unavowed maxim of many Protestants when filling a vacancy. No doubt the Protestant candidate was often a more suitable person than the Catholic; various causes have made the members of the one faith better

equipped for the battle of life than the members of the other. But this did not justify a policy of rigid exclusion, such as was undoubtedly practised.

The Catholic chafed against this treatment, which he resented in various ways, according to his temperament. "Exclusive dealing," or, in other words, "boycotting," was sometimes called into play against illiberal employers, but the people rarely persisted in this course long enough to make it really effective. Also there were occasional riots and tumults, as, for instance, when Catholic coal-porters struck as a protest against what they considered an injustice to their religion. But perhaps the most effective weapon was to be found in the vehement oratorical onslaughts of O'Connell. He held up the narrow prejudices of his opponents to such scorn and derision that, for very shame and fear of his exposures, they were compelled to some show of impartiality.

It must be confessed, on the other hand, that there was a deep vein of ignorance and superstition in the Roman Catholics, especially among the peasantry. The Emancipation movement was largely sustained by a belief in old legends and prophecies. A now forgotten book which is much referred to in contemporary writings is Dr. Walmisley's "History of the Christian Church," better known as "Pastorini's Prophecies." It was a farrago of nonsense, appealing chiefly to national vanity and credulity, but it seems to have played a prominent part in working up popular feeling. And even outside political matters

there was much idle superstition. There was a universal belief, for instance, in charms, enchantments, and fairies, and this belief sometimes manifested itself in the form of cruelty. Literature has cast a veil of romance over folk-lore, but it should not be forgotten that such beliefs have their odious side and cause the infliction of much needless suffering. To this day old women, who are believed to "charm the butter," *i.e.* to use secret arts to prevent it from forming in the churn, encounter the ill-will of their neighbours. But a hundred years ago such superstitions were much more powerful. There is a case, for instance, of a man, apparently with the best intentions in the world, trampling the life out of a sick child on whom he was endeavouring to effect a miraculous cure. Education has gone far to drive out pernicious, and indeed semi-barbarous, ideas such as these. At this time the people, particularly as regards the older generation, were in a state of ignorance, and had for centuries received no adequate intellectual training. No wonder, then, that their lively imaginations and their deep religious spirit tended to fill up the void in their minds (which should have been filled up by education) with a fantastic crowd of legends and superstitions. The house lay empty and open, and the seven devils entered in. If Irish Protestants had been subjected to the same conditions they would probably have shown similar results. All the world over superstition is coupled with ignorance.

CHAPTER VI

EDUCATION

At the commencement of the nineteenth century education in Ireland was in a most chaotic and disorganised state. It was not that there was any lack of popular interest in the subject; there is a great body of testimony to the effect that all grades of society, even the poorest and most ignorant, were anxious to procure the best education they could afford for their children, and were glad to avail themselves of every opportunity that offered for that purpose.

The "pious founder and benefactor" had done his part in the past; endowed schools and charitable foundations were quite numerous and widespread. The legislature, even so far back as the reigns of Henry VIII. and Elizabeth,[1] had ordered the establishment of elementary schools under the supervision of the incumbent in every parish, and of free schools of a more advanced type in the chief city of each diocese. Yet these enactments, and others of the same kind, failed to produce the expected effect.

The parochial and diocesan institutions depended

[1] These were to form part of a general Anglicising policy. See Acts of 28 Henry VIII. and 12 Elizabeth.

too much on the educational zeal of the ecclesiastical authorities for the time being. In many districts they were either non-existent or starved for lack of funds. Not being subject to adequate control from without, they were only too apt to fall into that state of slackness and disorder which is so fatal to scholastic efficiency. Similarly, too, the foundation schools were often conducted in a way calculated to horrify the worthy men who had left their money for such charitable purposes. The schoolmaster became a mere farmer, cultivating for his own profit the lands which formed the school endowment, and leaving his pupils, at such seasons as they were not assisting him with manual labour, to be taught by unqualified assistants. The famous Dotheboys Hall of Dickens, with its practical illustration of the meaning of such words as "*winder*" and its atrocious combination of imposture, cruelty, and neglect, had numerous counterparts in the Irish counties.

Again, the religious difficulty, which seems always destined to be a clog on progress in Ireland, was continually cropping up. The better sorts of school were almost always under Protestant control, and as such, naturally suspect to Roman Catholics, who, however, from sheer lack of an alternative, were often obliged to send their children to the schools dominated by a rival creed. But perhaps the mere Protestantism of these institutions could have been passed over if they had not been in so many cases active proselytising agencies. The State, as in the

case of the Charter Schools, spent considerable sums on trying to convert Catholics into Protestants through the medium of free education.

There were in existence several wealthy societies[1] which were prepared to give generous grants for the building, equipment, and maintenance of schools on condition that tracts and prayerbooks should be freely distributed and every effort made to propagate the doctrines of the Established Church. But the average Catholic preferred to send his child to "hedge schools," where his faith would be safe, even if the secular instruction received were not of so high a quality.

Nearly every parish possessed one of these happy-go-lucky establishments. They were sometimes, as their name implies, held under a hedge in the open air, but as a rule the schoolmaster procured some farmer's barn, or had a mud cabin run up to house himself and his scholars. When thus settled, he would issue notices to the neighbours describing in the most grandiloquent and mendacious language his fitness for the task of instruction. The fees were moderate, it is true—2s. 6d. a quarter for reading alone, 4s. 6d. for reading and writing, 6s. 6d. for reading, writing, and arithmetic. But the results were disproportionate even to these low charges; the hedge schoolmasters were as a rule rank impostors, who were incapable of imparting even the "three R's."[2]

[1] The Association for Discountenancing Vice, London Hibernian Society, and others.

[2] There are vague traditions ascribing great scholarship to some of the hedge schoolmasters. There may be some truth in these

Besides, even those of them who had some pretensions to knowledge found it impossible to struggle with their poverty of equipment. Books, pens, and paper, for instance, which are of course three essentials to the teaching of reading and writing, were at this time so expensive as to be practically beyond the reach of schoolmasters depending for support on the haphazard fees of the peasantry. Consequently they had to manage as best they could with whatever came handiest and cheapest. Boys were taught to read out of such edifying productions as the "Life of Moll Flanders," "The Garden of Love," biographies of eminent highwaymen, and the like.[1]

The children who came to school were obliged to sit on stones or sods for lack of forms, and had to use their knees for writing-desks. When the miry roads and inclement weather of winter caused the attendance of pupils to fall off, a long vacation of six months set in, the master disappeared from the parish, perhaps never to return, and his scholars had leisure to forget whatever little knowledge they had acquired. No wonder that keeping a school was the last refuge of men who had found it impossible to earn a living in any other way.

The neglected state of popular education had

stories, though to most of the ignorant peasantry the adage *Omne ignotum pro magnifico* would probably apply. The system certainly lent itself to imposture.

[1] The hedge schoolmasters were suspected, too, and not without cause, of fostering a spirit of lawlessness not only among their charges, but among the country people generally.

attracted the attention of the Irish Parliament, but although queries had been addressed to the Protestant bishops in 1796, no steps were taken to amend a crying evil. The Imperial Parliament ten years later appointed a Commission of Inquiry, which, after a considerable lapse of time, reported itself strongly opposed to the system of endowed proselytism, which was only too prevalent. The commissioners favoured the establishment of a permanent Board, which would supervise the local schools and assist them on condition that a certain standard of teaching was maintained and all due allowance made for religious susceptibilities. The members of all creeds were to be educated jointly, and while full opportunity should be given to priests and ministers for doctrinal instruction to their own flocks outside school hours, it was thought that there might easily be devised for purposes of general moral elevation a system of instruction based on the principles common to all Christian sects, and that something of this sort might be taught even in school time. Peel, who was Chief Secretary at the time, was rather inclined to favour this solution, though his Attorney-General, Saurin, sought to dissuade him in words which show a remarkable insight into the difficulties that lie at the root of such a settlement. "The establishing an abstract system of Christianity," he said, "that shall avoid what is peculiar to each sect, and yet preserve what is essential, looks very like making a new religion for the country, and establishing by law a

precedent for a schism by consent from all churches and sects."

But in those days there were few to agree with Saurin. The prevailing ideal was an education, undenominational and non-proselytising, yet thoroughly Christian. Not until about 1820 is the view advanced that the youth of the country should be classified according to their beliefs and brought up in compartments, as it were, closely screened from all contact with any but their own co-religionists. So, although Peel did not appoint a State Department to foster education on undenominational lines, as had been suggested by the Commission of Inquiry, he inaugurated a policy of subsidising private effort in the same direction. There was already in existence a fitting object for such encouragement.

This was the Society for the Education of the Poor, usually called the Kildare Place Society, because its headquarters were in the street of that name in Dublin. It had been formed, amid universal acclamation, in the year 1811, to carry into more general use a system of mixed education which had already proved successful in one of the Dublin parishes.[1] Its membership included representatives of all denominations, amongst others the redoubtable Daniel O'Connell himself, now fast becoming the acknowledged leader of the Irish Catholics.

The device approved by the society for incul-

[1] St. Catherine's. See Rev. Dr. H. Kingsmill Moore's *An Unwritten Chapter in the History of Education*, p. 89.

cating the general principles of Christianity without giving offence to any section was, to quote its own words, "the reading of the Scriptures without note or comment." This principle, so bitterly criticised afterwards, does not seem to have been seriously questioned at the time. In such matters as the use of the Douay or the Authorised Version, the selections of passages to be read, and so forth, a wide latitude was allowed, and it was thought at the time that the religious difficulty had been solved. In 1815 the Irish Government, under the influence of Peel, awarded a sum of £6000 to the Society, and in subsequent years increased its grant, until in 1825 and 1826 Kildare Place was in receipt of nearly £30,000 of public money.

Considered purely from the educational point of view, this policy seems to have been an unqualified success. The newly formed Society showed such zeal and energy that, in a short space of time, the land was dotted with schools, which were under their auspices or had adopted their system.[1]

Poor districts were assisted by contributions towards building, outfit, maintenance, and salaries; a system of thorough inspection was established, in order that subscribers might be sure that a proper standard of efficiency was maintained; a series of cheap school-books was issued, in order to leave no excuse for placing "Moll Flanders" and the like in the hands of young children. A great model school

[1] By 1824 there were 1100 schools in connection with the Society.

was founded in Dublin, which served the double purpose of a training college for teachers and a centre for testing and exhibiting the latest methods of teaching.

In this respect the Society, and through it Ireland generally, was a good deal under the influence of Joseph Lancaster, a remarkable young English Quaker, who shares with his contemporary and rival Dr. Bell the credit of having devised the first workable system of universal primary education. The first point to be aimed at was economy, for it must be remembered that the instruction of the poor was still semi-charitable,[1] and the donors of subscriptions were anxious that as large a number as possible of children should be educated on the smallest expenditure consistent with efficiency. There was no desire to turn out crack pupils, but rather to spread the blessing of enlightenment throughout the lower classes generally. Hence a single teacher might have an enormous number of children to manage, sometimes as many as four hundred.

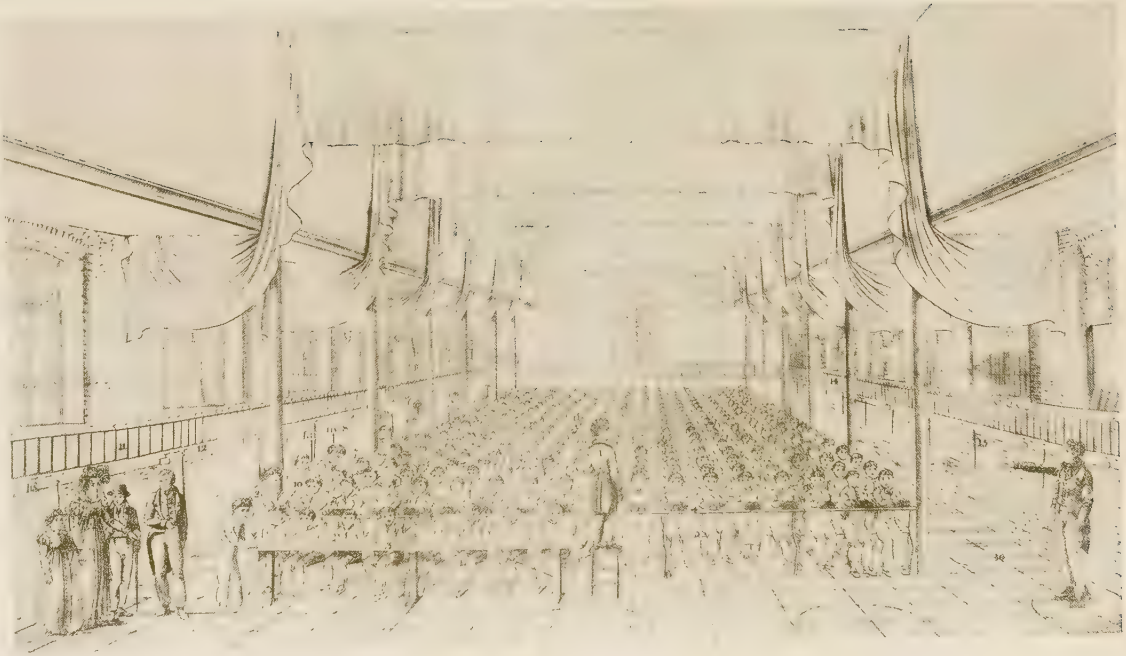
He was not allowed salaried assistants, but had to utilise the services of pupil teachers or monitors. In order to prevent the confusion and turmoil to which children are by nature so prone, especially when gathered together in great numbers, an elaborate system of school drill and discipline, both while actually under instruction and while changing classes,

[1] Many schools distributed clothing at cheap rates, and some even gave the poorest of the children free breakfasts.

was put in force. Lancaster's ideal in this respect was that his pupils should resemble a well-trained regiment in the precision and accuracy of their movements. Besides the drill there were other devices for saving labour and expense.[1] As writing materials were dear, children were at first taught to write with pointed sticks in sand spread for the purpose over the top of a special kind of desk;[2] but later, slates replaced this ingenious but rather clumsy expedient. Similarly for reading purposes, cards or tablets, which could be varied at will and were cheaper than ordinary books, were in general use, their special advantage lying in the fact that they rendered the devolution of authority to monitors more practicable. Even a subject like arithmetic, which, with its secret pitfalls and its incessant need for accurate working, seems to demand most imperatively the direct personal supervision of a competent mind, was taught in its earlier stages by means of "dictation tablets." The monitor read out, and the children wrote down, some such series of propositions as that "nine added to six makes fifteen, and eight added to that makes twenty-three," and so on, and by this means it was thought that the essential facts of arithmetic would gradually take a permanent hold of the infant mind. Subsequently, however, when the

[1] The average annual cost per pupil in a Kildare Place school was, in the year 1829, two shillings and fivepence.

[2] Lancaster adopted this method from Dr. Bell, to whom the idea first occurred on seeing native children in India writing with their fingers in the sand.



A SCHOOL ON LANCASTER'S SYSTEM

For description see p. xx

Kildare Place Society took to editing, printing, and publishing school-books at prices then thought to be marvellously cheap, the tablets seem to have been replaced by primers of the familiar type.

The curriculum in the majority of Irish schools does not seem to have gone beyond reading, writing, and arithmetic, with sometimes a utilitarian course of weaving for boys and spinning or needlework for girls. Indeed, those at the head of the educational world in the United Kingdom were by no means disposed to extend a liberal education to the poorer classes. A peculiar distrust and half-patronising contempt of the people runs through the writings of the educationalists of the day. The three R's, it was thought, always combined with as much moral grounding as could well be driven into the children's heads, would make the rising generation good subjects and honest workmen, "willing and able to do their duty in that state of life to which it should please God to call them," but undistressed by ambitions to rise out of their original sphere.[1] The modern watch-word, "A ladder from the board school to the university," or even the Napoleonic maxim, *La carrière ouverte aux talents*, would not have appealed in the least to the patrons of Bell and Lancaster.

The Kildare Place Society seems, however, to have

[1] Even the teaching of reading and writing was gravely canvassed in some quarters, as it was said that workmen might fall into the habit of reading seditious and immoral books, and that servant-maids would be writing love-letters when they should be working. Arithmetic, the "pure science of numbers," was, however, unexceptionable.

taken a less narrow view of its functions. In some of its schools geography was taught, a special set of maps being published for the purpose; in others arithmetic widened out into the ample domain of mathematics;[1] again, many Irish boys enjoyed the great benefit to both hand and eye which is to be derived from the teaching of drawing. School libraries were maintained, to the benefits of which the older pupils were admitted as a reward for diligence and merit shown. Corporal punishment, which had been carried to the point of brutality in the hedge schools and the endowed institutions, was discouraged as much as possible, and a system of "shaming" offenders appears to have taken its place. Much reliance seems to have been placed on the efficacy of prizes and premiums as incentives to good conduct and checks upon indolence and disorderliness.

From the educational point of view the Kildare Place Society was succeeding admirably,[2] but its directors seem to have been unduly optimistic as to the smooth working of the religious compromise which they had introduced. Compulsory reading of the Bible in school was decidedly unwelcome to Roman Catholics, although they had at first acquiesced in this cardinal point of the Kildare

[1] Geometry, mensuration, mechanics, &c.

[2] The Comte de Lasteyrie, an eminent French educationist, considered its Dublin school "le plus bel etablissement de ce genre qui existe dans le monde entier." See his letter quoted by Rev. Dr. Kingsmill Moore.

Place system. The well-intentioned Protestants who formed the bulk of the membership of the Society hardly realised how very differently other people might regard a volume which to themselves was all in all. On the other hand, the Catholic view is well expressed by O'Connell. "We believe," he said, "that the entire word of God has not been preserved in writing: we believe that a portion has been preserved in the church which preserved that writing; and, this being our tenet, you cannot expect to have the Catholic clergy submit when their attention is roused, because they must have tradition, which we also call the Word of God."[1] The Catholics were by this time not disposed to accept any compromise, whether educational or political, with their opponents. They saw victory in sight, and were not inclined to put up with half measures.

Failing to induce the Kildare Place Society to forego the compulsory reading of Scripture, the chief leaders of the Catholic party resigned their membership and endeavoured, with but scant success, to found a rival association. For the next ten years a war, not always bloodless, was carried on between the great church and the powerful society.[2] The priests used their influence to the uttermost to prevent parents from sending children to a Kildare Place

[1] Speech at meeting of Kildare Place Society, 1820.

[2] School-houses, both Protestant and Roman Catholic, were sometimes attacked by angry mobs. Letters of Rev. J. Mulcahy, July 13, 1826, and Major Warburton, September 9, 1826.

school.[1] On the other hand, the secular education to be had at these institutions was admittedly so good, that Catholics were placed in a painful dilemma between their desire to do the best they could for their children and their dread of calling forth the thunders of the Church. Many must have defied or ignored the anathemas pronounced on them, for the Society, although undoubtedly hard hit by the secession of O'Connell and his friends and the subsequent policy of withdrawing the children, was always able to point to the presence of large numbers of Roman Catholic pupils in their establishments as a proof that the Kildare Place ideal of mixed education was not unattainable.

There can be no doubt, however, that their policy was really unsuited to the circumstances of the country. "Undenominationalism" could not be welcome in a land where the lines of cleavage were so sharply marked and where the memories of persecutions and confiscations were still fresh. Even the clergy of the Protestant Episcopal Church did not altogether approve the system which, for financial reasons, they were often forced to accept. The Christianity thus taught was, they declared, a weak, colourless thing, worthless for any good purpose. The children often quite missed the meaning of what

[1] It was about this period that the order of Christian Brothers, which had been founded in 1802 to impart primary education under the auspices of the Roman Catholic Church, began to extend its schools over Ireland. They were probably the first to challenge effectively the Kildare Place establishments.

they read, and although grammatical and etymological instruction was allowed, yet in practice it became very hard to draw a line between mere verbal elucidation and doctrinal comment. Such words as "apostle," for instance, could hardly be explained intelligibly without trenching on the province of doctrine. As a matter of fact, the Bible, with its parables, its passages of lofty poetry, its continual preoccupation with the unseen world, its references to ancient times and remote countries, is about the most difficult book that could possibly be placed in the hands of young people.

The Government delayed some time before taking any effective steps to cope with the situation created by the secession of the Catholics from the Kildare Place Society. At first it tried to encourage private effort in the foundation and equipment of schools. With this end in view, between 1820 and 1824 large sums of money were granted by Parliament to be expended in assisting local subscriptions to building funds. Over a thousand applications were received from persons desiring to be aided out of these grants; as a rule they came from clergymen of the various denominations or from prominent landlords, who had interested themselves to the extent of giving a free site, or perhaps a handsome donation. But the State, as always in Ireland, found itself gradually impelled to take the control completely into its own hand. The methods of Kildare Place were rejected, though reluctantly. In 1831 the subsidies which had so long supported that Society

were discontinued, and almost simultaneously, by the celebrated letter of the Hon. E. G. Stanley, then Chief Secretary, a new State department was founded to manage primary education in Ireland.[1] This was the beginning of the present National Education Board. Its powers were carefully defined, and were mainly restricted to the very sphere in which Kildare Place had done such useful work, *e.g.* the granting of loans or donations for the purpose of building schools, the training of teachers, editing and publication of books, maintenance of a system of inspection, and so on. Education was still to be mixed or "undenominational," and Stanley enjoined on the Board that they were to treat with peculiar favour applications from bodies representing more than one creed, but to hold over any which seemed to emanate solely from one section until they had inquired the reason of their being so narrowed. Religious teaching was handed over to the various clergy, the attempt to find a "common denominator" for all forms of Christianity having proved as futile as Saurin had predicted it would be. The impartiality of the Board in matters relating to religion was secured by the device, then new but now stereotyped, of dividing its membership equally between the rival churches. The system, as is well known, has now become frankly and thoroughly denominational. Each religious body is "master in its own household" as regards educational matters, and

[1] Letter to Duke of Leinster, October 1831.

there is no doubt that the present state of things, with all its inevitable overlapping and waste of effort,[1] meets with popular approval.

In the domain of secondary education very little progress seems to have been made throughout the period. The better kinds of endowed school, when not subject to the creeping paralysis which endowment so often brings in its train, seem to have given a fairly liberal training. The Royal Schools in Ulster and the Erasmus Smith Schools taught the classics, while some of the Dublin institutions, especially those which trained boys for the sea, gave instruction in the higher mathematics.[2] But the pleasantest picture in Irish educational life at the time was that presented by the Belfast Academical Institution.

This college, for it was really much more than a school, was built in 1814 by voluntary contribution from the citizens amounting in all to £15,000. In recognition of its good work it received a grant from the State, which, however, as the event showed, was not an indispensable necessity of its existence. Its curriculum was divided into two divisions, the "collegiate" and the "mercan-

[1] As, for example, when two or even three rival schools, each, of course, with its separate buildings and staff, exist side by side in a small town, where one would, but for religious jealousies, easily suffice.

[2] The Bluecoat School's course included Euclid and Navigation, while the Hibernian Marine Society's boys even studied Fluxions (the Calculus), Spherics (Spherical Trigonometry), and Astronomy.

tile." In the latter the usual commercial subjects were taught; in the former the authorities seem almost to have taken "the whole of learning for their province," for the courses included not only Latin, Greek, French, Mathematics, Chemistry, Natural Philosophy, but even such recondite branches of knowledge as Hebrew, Logic, Metaphysics, Anatomy, and Physiology.[1] Even the Irish language, then better known on the roadside than in the lecture-room, was taught, solely, however, for the utilitarian reason that, as it was still the vernacular in many districts, some acquaintance with the native dialects was necessary to those whose business might take them here and there over the country.

The Academical Institution was fast becoming a university, and indeed had already been adopted as a training college for the ministry by the Presbyterian Church, when its directors seem to have received a pretty plain hint from the authorities that this extraordinary growth of a university from a mere school had attracted their attention, and that such a singular development would not be acquiesced in unless the approval of the Government were previously obtained. In 1817, J. Stevenson, Secretary of the Institution, in a letter addressed to Peel speaks, as if quoting from a letter in his hand, of "the determination of Government against the establishment of a college in the North of Ireland," and

[1] Petition of Belfast Academical Institution, 1818; also prospectus and other printed papers, 1820.

their unwillingness to "lend their countenance to any institution which, though it may disclaim the name of a college, may, by indirect means, seek to exercise the authority of one."[1] The Government grants were for some years withdrawn.[2] As an explanation of the apparent illiberality of the view taken by the authorities, it must be remembered that Belfast had only twenty years before been seething with Jacobinism and discontent, that rebellion had actually broken out in Ulster in 1798, and there was some reason to fear that this rising academy might perhaps even then fall into hands that would use it for seditious purposes.

Among the Roman Catholic communion secondary education seems to have been as yet but little developed, except in so far as such orders as the Jesuits had turned their attention thereto. At Clongowes, in County Kildare, there was already an important college, and Maynooth contained, until the year 1817, a lay school in conjunction with its theological seminary. The "Royal College of St. Patrick, Maynooth," to give it its full title, had ever since its institution been the centre of such angry controversy that no very progressive policy could be expected from that quarter. The ultra-Protestant party grudged the money spent on endowing "Papistry," and seized every opportunity of girding

[1] Letter of Jan. 25, 1817.

[2] A commission recommended the renewal of the grants subsequently.

at the college and its directors. Hence there were frequent bickerings, and every new step was subjected to a very suspicious scrutiny. The establishment in 1801 of this identical lay boarding-school by Dr. Flood, then President of Maynooth, had given rise to a heated correspondence between Lord Hardwicke, the Viceroy, and Lords Clare and Kilwarden, who, as Lord Chancellor and Lord Chief Justice, were official visitors of the college. Lord Clare had taken it on himself to approve the innovation, a course of conduct which his Excellency had resented as tending to compromise the Government in a matter so very delicate as anything connected with Catholics and their education must be.[1] The incident is of no great importance, except perhaps as showing the guarded attitude which the Governments of the early nineteenth century felt it incumbent on them to observe towards the Catholics. It is interesting to note that Kilwarden states that it was always understood that Maynooth College was to be a seminary solely for those training to be priests. In 1795, when the subject was first mooted, he had proposed to Pelham "the fitness of founding a college, contiguous to Trinity College and to be a member of the University of Dublin," in which the Fellows should be Roman Catholics, and the education of students for orders might be carried on. Dr. Troy, the Roman Catholic archbishop,

[1] Letters of Lords Hardwicke, Clare, and Kilwarden, Dec. 1801–Jan. 1802.

had, however, opposed this plan, which is even now not without its supporters, on the ground that the tenets of his church forbade the co-education of clerical and lay students.

Generally speaking, however, there is not much data from which to judge of the state of the secondary schools at this time. Both private enterprise and charitable endowment produced good results on occasion, yet there is only too much reason to fear that there was much incompetence and inefficiency. Not until the establishment, in recent times, of a Government board which holds yearly examinations, on the results of which it awards large money prizes to brilliant pupils and results fees to their teachers, did Irish middle-class schools find themselves compelled to maintain a certain standard. Now the pendulum has swung the other way, and the competition among rival schools for the prizes of the "Intermediate" has become so keen that the children are in danger of being "crammed" and overworked, to the certain detriment of their bodies and the probable weakening of their overcharged little brains.

The weakness of the secondary schools seem to have reacted on Ireland's one university. It is generally admitted by the historians of Trinity College, Dublin, that the ancient foundation which they so delight to celebrate was then under a cloud. The storms of politics had found an echo in her quiet quadrangles. Her alumni had been suspected

of disloyalty, and Lord Clare had held a visitation in 1798, as a result of which Robert Emmet and others had been expelled. Whenever the Provostship fell vacant, the Government nominated "safe" men, pious and dignified, no doubt, and even tolerably learned, but quite lacking in brilliancy or initiative. The college seems to have stood still for a while, and bade fair to merit the reproach of being the "silent sister." However, there were signs of some movement under this apathy. New studies, such as modern history,[1] began to be introduced, and in the older ones, such as mathematics, there were such occasional comet-like appearances as that of Sir William Hamilton, the discoverer of quaternions. Within, as without, the old grey walls of Trinity these three decades were a time when seed was being sown and the foundations of the Ireland of to-day were being steadily laid.

[1] Letter of Rev. G. Millin, Sept. 25, 1822.

CHAPTER VII

THE PUBLIC SERVICE

THE State has always played a much larger part in Irish life than in English; the individualistic theories which for a time dominated the latter country have hardly ever found a foothold in the former. Partly because of the poverty of the average Irishman, partly also owing to his lack of initiative, the Irish Government has found itself constrained to undertake many duties which elsewhere are left to the private citizen. The State has on several occasions had to feed its starving subjects "out of the hand of the magistrate"; it has organised great nurseries for destitute or forsaken children; it has taken on itself the difficult task of providing the unemployed adult with work; it has tried to secure cheap fuel and food for the poor; it has nursed the sick and sheltered the infirm. In many ways it has intervened, with more or less success, to save the people from the natural ills of their condition.

As State effort, or the quasi-State effort of societies assisted or controlled by the Government, is so prominent a factor in Irish social and economic history, it seems desirable, in the first place, to give the reader some idea of the system of administration,

the principles on which it was conducted, and the character of the men by whom it was worked. When the operations of the Government have been illustrated, he will be in a better position to judge how far its failures in any direction were due to its own defects or to the inherent impossibility of the tasks which it undertook.

At the commencement of the nineteenth century, the Civil Service, to use a convenient term of modern introduction,[1] was in a state hardly to be realised by existing members of that body. It is generally admitted that the present servants of the State exhibit, on the whole, a very fair standard of intelligence, honesty and efficiency, and it would not be difficult to point out conspicuous instances of ability and devotion. But a hundred years ago the whole system was permeated with jobbery and corruption, and the grossest abuses prevailed. At the very gates of the service, now decorously entered by competitive examination, there was a fierce and unseemly struggle of place-hunters and their patrons. Everything went by "interest," nothing by merit. Those who desired any appointment, whether great or small, were compelled to procure the intercession on their behalf of some influential person, usually a territorial magnate or minor politician. The correspondence of the Lords Lieutenant and their Chief Secretaries is filled with the letters of these men, asking this place

[1] In 1800 nobody speaks of "civil servants." There is as yet no universally accepted generic term.

for one of their protégés and that for another, complaining because their nominations are not regarded, jealous because a local rival has carried off some appointment in their teeth, threatening to use their influence against Government if their demands are not attended to. Some extracts taken haphazard from the letters of a typical office-seeker[1] to his friend and go-between at Dublin Castle will illustrate the importunity and arrogance of such persons.

"I want a tidewaiter [*i.e.* tidewaitership] for a man of the name of M'Carthy at Crookhaven; let me know if there is a vacancy. If there is, speak to Castlereagh."

"I request you will send me down Mr. Symes' commission to Baltimore in the room of Madden, and also the one for Tim Sullivan in the room of Tobin. . . . Mr. Purefoy at Cork is very ill. . . . I shall apply for his successor—I wish to devide (*sic*) what he has, for he has another office besides Surveyor of the Stores."

Again, a few days later: "Those men recommended by the Commissioners are men of Lord D—— [the writer's local opponent]: it is the Surveyor-General who recommended them to the Board at his desire. If Mr. Pelham acted as fairly and honestly as his predecessor, he would order a list of the vacancies to be sent to me to fill them up." The writer of these letters, who, from his tone, might have been the patronage secretary of the Irish

[1] A peer living in the south of Ireland.

Government, held absolutely no official position, but his wealth and connections enabled him to control several seats in the county where he resided.

Subsequent letters reveal this gentleman in an angry mood, provoked, no doubt, by inattention to his demands.[1] The Chief Secretary is "that thief Pelham," and Lord Camden is "a cold-blooded politician." Both parties to these unpleasant transactions were equally guilty; the appointments were given as a reward for and an assurance of political support. It was the customary practice of the time, and little shame was felt or exhibited. But the effects on the Civil Service were absolutely deadening. A *personnel* recruited in this way could not be expected to show either zeal or efficiency. Higher and lower ranks alike were staffed with men of an inferior stamp, such indeed as might naturally be expected to commend themselves to the not very impartial or discerning mind of the patron. Hangers-on of various kinds, intriguers, sycophants, "poor relations," who found it impossible to earn their bread by any other means, discharged or superannuated servants—all these types found their way into the departments of State.

The "patrons" themselves sometimes condescended to accept a lucrative situation for themselves, usually one of the "patentee" offices which seem to

[1] Speaking of a person of this type, a Lord Lieutenant once said: "If H—— were given the whole of Ireland, he would ask for the Isle of Man for a potato garden."

have been designed to afford the maximum of emolument with the minimum of labour. These were peculiar posts filled, not by warrant or commission, but by a "patent" or direct grant from the Crown. They were usually to continue for the life of the person appointed, and were often granted to two or three persons either concurrently or in reversion. There were always handsome salaries annexed, and, indeed, the possession of a "patentee" office was practically equivalent to being placed on the pension list. The nominal holder of the situation never attended to his duties, but set aside a fraction of his pay to provide for a deputy and a couple of ill-paid clerks to act in his place. Almost every office in the service, but especially the great revenue-earning departments of the Customs and the Excise, was cursed with these clogs on sound administration. The "patentee" and his deputies could not be removed by the responsible heads of the departments into which they had been thrust. There was no effective mode of controlling their conduct or enforcing a necessary discipline. It is not in human nature to behave virtuously in such circumstances as these. The holder of the "patent" drew his pay and went off to Bath or elsewhere, never troubling to supervise the conduct of his deputy. The latter, in the meanwhile, proceeded to feather his own nest by the thousand and one little malpractices which are possible to an official through whose hands money passes. Secret commissions were accepted; extor-

tionate fees were charged; payments were diverted from the proper quarters; every art and device of embezzlement was carried on.

What Carlyle calls the "cash nexus" ran in its most baneful form through the whole public service. Many appointments were disposed of by purchase and the price duly paid over by the incoming to the outgoing officer.[1] Again, there was often a duplication, or rather a multiplication, of offices in the one person. A single individual might be in the enjoyment of a total salary of £2000, derived from three or four posts, the duties of which he could not possibly discharge simultaneously. Furthermore, ministers making appointments allowed themselves to be influenced by unworthy motives. With them, as with the Roman poet, it was a case of *Video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor.* They could not but see the evils around them and assign them to their true cause. But when some distressed half-bankrupt nobleman or mediocre politician writes entreating a place in order to support his family or maintain his title, he almost always gains his request. The result is that an office is mismanaged for an indefinite period, and the inevitable ruin of the lord or discrediting of the politician, postponed for a while by what is practically a gift of public money, comes at last with all the unpleasant and damning accompaniments of a great departmental scandal.

[1] As, for instance, in the Battle Axe Guard, the personal retinue of the Lord Lieutenant.

"B——'s appointment," Peel wrote in a letter of the year 1813, "would be a tremendous job;" but none the less B—— continued to rise in the service until his embezzlements were discovered and he had to flee the country. It is really appalling to think of the cynical way in which the Civil Service, with all its important and responsible functions, was treated by those at the head of affairs. In the Board of Works a situation worth £400 was bestowed on a mere lad, whose necessary attendance at school prevented him from coming near the office. Every department had its absentee or *fainéant* members.

Of course, the work was done in a fashion; if commissioners and secretaries took up their residence permanently at Clifton or Harrogate, there were usually on the spot subordinates who, whether from love of power or desire of gain, were only too ready to take over the management of things. The absentee chiefs left everything to these grand viziers, and were well content to be relieved of the trouble of wading through official papers and coming to a decision. Just as the "patentee" officers exercised their functions through a deputy, so also the heads of departments appointed by commission or warrant often turned their positions into sinecures by leaving everything to their head clerks. Though nominally in supreme authority and answerable to Parliament for the actions of their departments, they did nothing but append their signatures to documents, of whose contents they were quite ignorant. Thus power

was divorced from responsibility, with the usual results. The subordinate, too much trusted and too little supervised, committed some transgression which brought down the wrath of the public on the delinquent office. When put on his trial he pleaded authorisation from his chief, who probably denied all knowledge of the matter, and thus, with mutual recriminations and countercharges, it was impossible to fix the blame satisfactorily.

It is gratifying, however, to be able to trace, throughout the thirty years which form the period of this volume, a gradual reformation of the public service. The abuses were at their height during the years which immediately followed the Union. The effects of the orgy of corruption into which the ruling classes of Ireland had then plunged did not soon pass away. But after a decade had passed there began to be signs of improvement. The establishment of sounder administrative principles cannot be ascribed to any one statesman ; it is rather as if, to quote the scriptural phrase, a new leaven were working in the minds of those in authority.

No doubt the tendency towards amendment was stimulated by a wholesome fear of public exposure and discussion. In the United Parliament the spirit of inquiry and investigation seems to have been much keener than it was in the old Irish Parliament. The parliamentary question, that potent engine for the discomfiture of ministers whose consciences are uneasy, was beginning to be used with great effect

by members of the Opposition. An official of the Irish Office in London, writing for fuller information, remarks plaintively: "In these times of rigid inquiry and perpetual torment we cannot be too much *au fait* of everything."[1] Commissions of Inquiry were loudly called for, and their reports revealed such a scandalous state of affairs that reform became inevitable.

There was also another side to the question. The Government, which throughout the Napoleonic war and for some years after it was much hampered by financial embarrassments, could not but perceive the waste of money involved in maintaining the Civil Service in its inefficient and corrupt condition.[2] Why, for instance, pay the "patentee" holder of an office £1000 a year for performing, or procuring the performance of, certain work the market price of which, as indicated by the salary he paid his deputy, was only £500 a year? Or, to take a still more glaring instance, why permit the existence of any sinecure? Why pay any official, high or low, unless he attended personally to the duties of his office and gave value for his wages?

Accordingly, as has been said, in proportion as the nineteenth century wears on, the tone of the public service improves. The place-hunter becomes

[1] Letter of C. W. Flint, May 10, 1820.

[2] The British Treasury appears to have been the chief inspirer and promoter of schemes of Civil Service reform in Ireland. Its exertions in this respect seem eventually to have given it a control over the Irish departments such as was never possessed by the Irish Treasury.

less shameless and importunate. He does not disappear from the records altogether. Indeed, he is far from extinct at the present moment, as private secretaries can testify. But he finds it well to moderate the blatancy and the arrogance of his tone, and, above all, to avoid suggesting anything in the nature of a bargain. There are curious instances of this in the later papers of the Chief Secretary's Office. In 1822 an Irish peer wrote to Gregory, the Under Secretary, asking for a place in the police force for a friend of his. After introducing the matter, he went on to say: "I must consider that his Excellency places little value on the Parliamentary support which for many years I have given the present administration, should this gentleman's name be passed over, when submitted by you for His Lordship's consideration." Wellesley, who was then viceroy, replied very curtly. "I cannot," he said, "act in the administration of this Government on the principles stated by His Lordship." Furthermore he ordered the original letter to be kept, that he might consider the advisability of submitting it to the king and to Parliament. Six years before, a bribe had been offered in a particularly gross form to Peel. The offender was a person in a humble walk of life, and in his application had intimated his readiness to reward any one who could procure him a situation. Peel ordered a reply to be sent, which probably terrified the recipient out of his wits. He was told that his letter had been placed in the hands of the Attorney-General, who would in all

likelihood prosecute him for making so corrupt an offer.

The reform was gradual and was effected, as a rule, without disturbing vested interests. As the older generation of officials passed away by death or superannuation, the conditions on which office was to be held for the future were clearly explained to their successors. Some departments, however, were taken in hand and remodelled from top to bottom, care being taken to compensate persons injuriously affected by the change. The principles which are at the root of the present organisation were definitely and authoritatively stated, and everything which was at variance with them was, sooner or later, swept away. Sinecures were abolished; sale of offices was definitely forbidden; the "patentees" were bought out; grants in reversion were no longer permitted.[1] The fixing of responsibility on the proper quarter, the enforcement of some degree of industry, the swift detection and sharp punishment of peculation, the attraction of intelligent and honourable men into the service—all these ideals, most of which have since been realised, appear to have been first conceived at the beginning of the nineteenth century. A Committee of Inquiry of the year 1806, for instance, recommends that promotion should be made, as a general rule, from one grade to the next

[1] When an office was granted "in reversion" to any individual, he obtained the right of succeeding thereto whenever a vacancy should occur. Thus a sort of dynasty was established, and subordinates effectually excluded from promotion.

above it, and that some test of fitness should be imposed on persons entering the service.[1] This was an evident attempt to counteract the abuses of the system of patronage as exercised hitherto. Again, the pay and prospects of the lower ranks were improved, in order to leave less excuse for venality and corruption there. Thus, for example, by successive acts a scheme of superannuation was brought into being. Previously, of course, pensions had been given to old officials, but it was purely as a matter of compassion and favour, and in the absence of legislative provision on the subject each case had been dealt with individually, and was accorded parsimonious or generous treatment according to the whim of the authorities or the state of the departmental funds. Furthermore, personal attention to duty began to be exacted from all, high or low. Among the most curious survivals of this phase are the lists sent in to the Chief Secretary from the various offices, showing the number of times each member of the controlling board appeared at a meeting for the transaction of business.

In order to illustrate the foregoing remarks, it may be well to give here a sketch of the framework of the Irish Civil Service as it existed in 1800, indicating the more important or interesting departments, and also the directions in which change was made. At the head of all, then as now, was the office of the Chief Secretary, or, as he was then often

[1] The department under consideration is the Irish Customs. See Parliamentary Papers of 1806.

called, the Principal Secretary to the Lord Lieutenant. Probably because of its situation close under the eye of Government, it does not seem to have suffered from the usual departmental weaknesses, and was in several respects more influential than it is now. Until the Union it was practically paramount in Ireland, and imposed its authority on all. It contained a "Military Department," which was entrusted with large powers affecting the disposal and maintenance of the garrison in Ireland. It controlled even great revenue-earning departments, like the Customs and the Excise, which are now directed from London.[1] Its financial powers, which are now largely circumscribed by the British Treasury, were not then under any such surveillance. It is true that there was until the amalgamation of the Exchequers a separate Irish Treasury, but it was the servant, not the adviser or director, of the Irish Government.[2] It kept the chest, no doubt, but it could not refuse the Chief Secretary's demands so long as any money remained in its possession.[3] Accordingly, that officer had practically a free hand

[1] A letter of 1810 affords an instance of this control. In connection with the Sligo Custom House, the Commissioners of Customs are reminded that they must "bow to the decision of Government," *i.e.* to the ruling of the Chief Secretary.

[2] An interesting memorandum of the year 1817, unfortunately left unsigned, points out that the Irish Chancellor of the Exchequer is only the "principal fiscal officer" of the Government, not, as in England, the "principal confidential minister."

[3] It may be remarked that it was often in desperate straits for money.

as regards expenditure, and could dispose of the public funds in whatever manner he thought fit, restrained only by the obligation he was under to justify his actions subsequently before Parliament. The administration on its financial side was characterised, therefore, by much greater elasticity and adaptability than at present. When a sudden need arose it could be dealt with at once. As an instance may be quoted Peel's method of coping with the danger of famine or pestilence. He was able to act promptly and effectively, whereas later Chief Secretaries have always been obliged, when faced with the same circumstances, to waste precious time writing letters to London to obtain Treasury approval. On the other hand, however, this Treasury supervision has been of the greatest value in preventing the diversion of public money to improper uses and in checking administrative scandals.

As regards developments within the Chief Secretary's Office itself, there seems to be a distinct rise in the positions of both Chief Secretary and Under Secretary as compared with the Lord Lieutenant. Of course, much depended always on the characters of individuals holding the posts. An able man always enhances the importance of whatever post he may occupy. But there were other factors at work too. It has been remarked how sharp an interest the Imperial Parliament, by its select committees and its inquisitive private members, was taking in Ireland at this time. The Chief Secretary, the re-

presentative of the Irish Government in the House of Commons, was necessarily of the greatest importance, as holding all these multifarious threads in his hands. He was perpetually employed, too, in framing Bills and conducting them through their various stages. The Irish Parliament, with its comparatively infrequent meetings and its fits of apathy, does not seem to have called out the Chief Secretary's energies to such an extent.[1] Similarly, too, the Under Secretary's permanent position and intimate acquaintance with a mass of minute detail gave him great advantage, especially when his chiefs were men of mediocre abilities or did not stay long enough in authority to acquire the necessary knowledge. Hardwicke, for instance, who was Lord Lieutenant from 1801 to 1806 and was served by a succession of weak and transient Chief Secretaries, seems to have handed over the administration very largely to his Under Secretary, Marsden. The less notable of the Chief Secretaries followed the same course.[2] And each successive Lord Lieutenant, with the exception, perhaps, of the energetic Wellesley, was increasingly content to confine himself to social functions and the dispensing of patronage. Throughout the nineteenth century the process has gone on, until the

[1] It may almost be said that no ante-Union Chief Secretary, with the exception perhaps of Castlereagh, whom the Union struggle itself brought into notice, made his tenure of the office particularly noteworthy.

[2] Goulburn, for instance, gave Gregory, his Under Secretary, power to vary his minutes at discretion.

Lords Lieutenant, who were quite autocratic in the eighteenth century, have come to stand to their Chief Secretaries in a relation not unlike that of a constitutional monarch to his prime minister.

Perhaps the next department in importance to the Chief Secretary's Office was the Customs. It was tremendously complicated in its organisation and full of the strangest anomalies. As has been said, it was the paradise of the sinecurist and the "patentee." There were twenty or thirty such persons in Dublin alone, all drawing excellent salaries and doing nothing to earn them. Even in positions which were not supposed to be sinecures, apathy and neglect were not unusual. But really inactivity was not to be wondered at when energy on the part of a Customs officer might only lead him into trouble. The laws under which he had to act were a vast and bewildering legislative labyrinth, which no man could master, especially as its details varied from year to year, according as financial necessity pressed more and more heavily on the Government. It is true that under these laws the revenue officer stood to reap a monetary reward from the profits of a seizure, but, on the other hand, unless he had acted very warily he might be open to a prosecution, and, if he were cast in heavy damages, was not unlikely to be utterly ruined. Many men, through excess of zeal, passed in this way from an office desk to a debtors' prison. So the Customs men were often decidedly cautious in the discharge of their duties,

preserving a due mean between an energy that would call out the resentment of the smuggler and a remissness that might provoke rebuke from above. Yet there were singular cases of devotion and even quiet heroism in their ranks, as, for instance, in the case of those undaunted men who took their lives in their hands and went out to remote and lonely situations to repress smuggling, knowing full well that they were sure of popular hatred, and were not unlikely to be murdered some day or other. These men, too, were usually ill-paid and occupied the lowest grade in the service, but they sometimes showed much finer qualities than the collectors and surveyors above them.

Much the same remarks would apply to the Excise. In fact, until 1801 the two departments were under the control of a single body of commissioners known as the Revenue Board, and although they were then separated, they still preserved a strong family likeness.[1] The complication of the Customs was faithfully reproduced by a similar complexity in the Excise. There were excise duties on an enormous number of things which are now exempt from taxation. In fact, it might almost be said that whatever could not be reached by the Customs fell into the net of the Excise. There were taxes on windows,

[1] After the amalgamation of the Exchequers, the Customs and Excise, and in fact all the revenue-earning departments, fell more and more into the hands of the Treasury. For a long time the Lord Lieutenant had a sort of co-ordinate power, and his approval was necessary for every important official step, but eventually he seems to have lost practically all power of control.

hearths, paper, glass, vinegar, starch, and a host of home-manufactured [1] commodities. And just as the Customs had to encounter a desperate and vindictive foe in the smuggler, the Excise men were confronted with the elusive, yet truculent, illicit distiller.

The third great revenue-earning department was the Stamp Office, which has long since been merged in the Inland Revenue. Like the others, it was remarkable for its intricacy and wideness of range. Besides the ordinary stamps on documents, the law insisted that certain articles when offered for sale should, under pain of a heavy penalty, bear a Government stamp.[2] For instance, hats were liable to a stamp duty, and the premises of Dublin hatters were sometimes raided in order to see whether their stock was all duly stamped. But the greatest sufferers were apparently newspaper editors, for every copy they issued had to pay in this way its quantum of tribute to the State, and on account of this dead-weight of taxation it was extremely difficult to earn a profit in the early days of an enterprise, and harder still to stave off disaster when once readers began to fall off.[3] The Stamp Office employed many men, and had its distributors all over the country.[4] The

[1] At present there are only twelve articles subject to Excise in the United Kingdom.

[2] This method of collecting revenue is still used in the case of playing-cards and patent medicines.

[3] Most of the Irish journals were heavily in debt to the Stamp Office. The stamp duty was, in 1813, twopence a copy.

[4] For a while it was magnificently lodged in Powerscourt House, Dublin, perhaps the most beautiful externally of all the old mansions of the Irish nobility.

THE GENERAL POST OFFICE, DUBLIN

As it appeared in 1818

chief evils it suffered from were theft and forgery. Stamps, being portable, valuable, and easily disposed of, offered much the same temptation as coin, jewellery, or plate do to the modern thief. Again, the facility of counterfeiting led to considerable trouble.

The Post Office was not at this time reckoned among the great revenue-earning departments. Communication was so tedious, expensive, and uncertain that there was little or no profit to be made out of the carrying of letters. On the contrary, there was a good deal of laborious pioneer work to be done; the Post Office had to struggle with local authorities to get new and necessary roads built and old ones kept in order. It did not, as now, avail itself for the most part of transport systems already in existence; it was obliged to subsidise coach proprietors or shipowners to induce them to turn their efforts to the desired quarter. Its exertions in this direction produced a very considerable effect on the trend of highways and shipping routes, and it is no exaggeration to say that many roads and harbours in Ireland owe their existence to the old Post Office.[1] The charges imposed on the public for the conveyance of letters were certainly high, but, with the prevailing methods of locomotion, could hardly have been reduced without causing a loss to the State.[1]

[1] This subject will be treated more fully in Chapter XI.

[2] It is not generally recognised that the successful introduction of penny postage was largely due to the fact that trains and steamers were, in Rowland Hill's time, beginning to be at the disposal of the Post Office. If his experiment had been tried twenty years earlier, it would in all probability have been a disastrous failure.

Internally the office was not in a very sound condition. Like the kingdom of Sparta, it had two chiefs, equal and co-ordinate in authority. The Postmasters-General were usually members of the peerage, and belonged to that class of official which, for lack of a better word, may be termed *fainéant.* For many years the Secretary was the actual controlling power, and when the Government at last appointed a really active and energetic Postmaster-General, he found much that displeased him in the behaviour both of his colleague and his second in command. The result was an acrimonious triangular duel of minutes and reports, which cannot have advanced the interests of the service or increased its dignity in the eyes of the public. However, taking it as a whole, the Post Office was a fairly well-managed department; if there were sinecurists at the head, there was less than the usual amount of peculation among the rank and file. It is probable that its intimate connection with and dependence on the commercial community fostered sound business habits and tended to promote honesty and efficiency.

Another important modern department, the Board of Works, was at the time of the Union only just commencing its career. It was in its origin an outgrowth of the Barrack Department, the Board entrusted with the construction and maintenance of the numerous and heterogeneous structures in which the Irish garrison was housed.[1] During the eighteenth

[1] These varied from, say, a large and fully-equipped premises like the Royal Barracks in Dublin, to the thatched mud cabins

century the Barrack Department seems to have looked after all Government property, whether civil or military. But about the year 1799 arrangements were made by which the care of civil buildings was removed from the province of the Barrack Office and handed over to a special body, the Board of Works.[1] Even so, however, its functions were comparatively limited, being confined to the construction and repair of such buildings in Dublin as might be required for official purposes, the planting of the parks, and similar small details. Great public works of national importance were not within its scope, and were usually carried on by special commissioners appointed *ad hoc* by the Lord Lieutenant.[2] To bodies of the same type, or to committees of the local grand juries, was usually allotted the task of furnishing adequate public buildings in the county towns, and providing such main roads and bridges as were required to fill up gaps in the system of inland communication. In course of time the Government found it advantageous to check the work of these commissions by reference to some competent technical adviser, and, as the architect of the Board of Works was close at hand,[3] he was usually the person selected for the purpose. The special commissions did not

in which detachments protecting the excisemen or the customs might be temporarily lodged.

[1] Memorial of Board of Works, May 13, 1806.

[2] For example, Kingstown Harbour, though so close to the capital that its construction might easily have been supervised from thence, was assigned to a special commission.

[3] He had at this period an office in Dublin Castle.

always work well; those which were in any way connected with the grand juries were tainted with the jobbery and extravagance which so often marred local administrative efforts. Accordingly there may be traced throughout the nineteenth century a growing reluctance on the part of the State to let the spending of public money pass out of the hands of persons directly under its control. The Board of Works, from its experience in such matters, has naturally been chosen as the representative of the State, and has come to control and supervise where it was formerly limited to making suggestions or giving advice when called on.

Much the same considerations have led to the founding of a Stationery Office to supply Government departments with books and papers. One of the angriest and bitterest controversies in Irish official history raged over the supply of stationery. A Dublin alderman had obtained a patent which gave him the exclusive right to supply all stationery required in Ireland for the use of Government. Like all monopolists, he proceeded to turn his privileged position to the best advantage, and furnished the offices with bad material at an exorbitant price. Some departments rebelled and obtained their stationery elsewhere, but the patentee took the matter to the law courts, and there successfully asserted his right against all opposition. But by this time public attention was aroused, and the alderman's political opponents were only too glad to avail themselves

of such an opportunity for attacking the Government for the bad bargain they had made, and simultaneously holding the Dublin Corporation up to odium in the person of one of its members.[1] Ministers soon became restive under the endless complaints they received from the offices, which were compelled to put up with the patentee's unsatisfactory wares, and the persistent cross-fire of questions and resolutions they had to face in the House of Commons. At one time they were willing to take the extreme step of cancelling the patent,[2] and although they do not seem to have gone to that length, they utilised the agitation as a justification for imposing very stringent conditions in connection with the supply of stationery for the future. It is hardly necessary to mention that when the patent was eventually vacated in the ordinary course, care was taken that no similar privilege should again be granted. Ultimately the system, which had proved effective elsewhere, of direct Government control of such matters through a special department, was extended to Ireland, and the supply of stationery for public purposes was entrusted to an Irish branch of the London Stationery Office.

The gradual development of statistical and registering departments throughout this period may also be ascribed to the very much increased spirit of

[1] The alderman in question was, like most of his colleagues, a bitter opponent of Catholic Emancipation

[2] Letter of C. W. Flint, April 7, 1821.

inquiry that pervaded public life after the Union. There was a sort of national stocktaking in progress, and the need for accurate information as to social and economic conditions was felt in many quarters.

Private effort had done a good deal. For instance, the first reliable estimate of the population of Dublin was the result of the efforts of a clergyman, the Rev. Dr. Whitelaw, Vicar of St. Catherine's. During the disturbances of 1798 an order had been issued that every householder in the city should affix to his door a list showing the number and names of the inmates. Whitelaw, with an acuteness which deserved great credit, perceived the opportunity this regulation offered for collecting statistical information, and, either personally or by using the services of assistants, made a round of all the streets and lanes, and noted the total number of inhabitants in each. After much labour he was able to give a return showing the total for the whole city. Similarly, too, the Dublin Society had set on foot statistical surveys of the Irish counties. And individuals like Wakefield and Newenham had given no small share of their life's energies to writing laborious and painstaking books which embodied in a compact form such data as they were able to procure. But although this is emphatically a function which should be performed by the State, both because it is most directly interested in the collection of proper information as to its subjects, and because it alone has the wide organisation required for the purpose, the State did not as yet

take a prominent part in such matters. An official census of Ireland was taken in 1813, but, owing to faulty arrangements by the grand juries, the returns were subject to great suspicions of inaccuracy and were not presented to Parliament. In 1821 the experiment was repeated, and thereafter the census was regularly taken in the first year of each decade. The State also took over from the Dublin Society the "trigonometrical survey," which that labour-loving body had originated, and was finding rather too complicated and tedious for even its zealous industry. In the hands of Government this became the "Ordnance Survey,"[1] and after many years of minute and painful effort succeeded in presenting an authoritative and accurate map of the country and all its subdivisions.

Besides collecting masses of information directly, the State began to exhibit a desire to preserve the sources from which information might be drawn, when desired, as from an almost inexhaustible well. Thus the mass of official records, which had been dispersed in various repositories here and there through the capital, were inspected and to some extent catalogued. In 1810 the House of Commons petitioned

[1] The name chosen shows that military considerations were uppermost in the minds of the authorities at the time of its establishment. The Ordnance Department, to which the work was originally committed, was concerned with such matters as strategic roads, forts and gun positions. It had therefore much experience of surveying, and was in a position to bestow all due attention on the military side of topography. Even to this day soldiers of the Royal Engineers are largely employed in the work.

the King to institute an inquiry into the state of the Irish records. Accordingly a committee was appointed, whose labours of investigation and description lasted over sixteen years. Very little care had been taken of these valuable historical documents hitherto. The Bermingham Tower repository, for instance, was over the Castle kitchen. The records of the Irish Parliament were kept for some years after the Union in a house in Anglesea Street, where they ran great risks of theft or destruction by fire. Some little attempt was now made to concentrate these collections in proper buildings and under adequate custody. Documents of a legal nature were deposited either in the Four Courts or in the new Registry of Deeds, then under construction in Henrietta Street. At the same time the Tower in the Lower Castle Yard,[1] previously used as a State prison and place of safe-keeping for the viceregal robes of office, was fitted up for the reception of the more important State papers.

Before leaving the subject of administrative organisation it may be well to devote some attention to the contemporary system of local or county government. It presents a remarkable and, in many re-

[1] Now known as the Record Tower. There is no more persistent error than that which dubs this ancient fabric the "Bermingham Tower." It is true that the Bermingham Tower records were brought thither from their warm quarters over the Castle kitchen (which, by the way, is all that remains of the true Bermingham Tower), but they could not transfer the name to their new home. There is plenty of documentary evidence on the point.

spects, an unfamiliar picture. The important problems connected with this side of the national life seem hardly to have been touched. Everything is still in the rudimentary stage. The urban districts were governed, it is true, by corporations of a fairly well-constructed kind, but in rural neighbourhoods their place was taken by administrative bodies of a singularly ill-organised and ineffective type.

Outside the municipalities, whose limits were, of course, very narrow, the only bodies entitled to exercise any authority in local administration were the Grand Juries. These possessed a power of levying a form of taxation known as "county cess," and of expending the sums raised in works of various kinds, usually roads, bridges, or public buildings. From the earliest times these bodies had combined judicial with executive functions.[1] At some time in the remote past it had become the custom to lay before the Grand Jury, who assembled in the county town at the time of assizes, various projects for local improvements, which, if approved by that body, were then drawn up in the form of "presentments" and submitted to the judge for his "fiat" or formal

[1] They made a kind of preliminary inspection of the cases returned for trial, and decided which should go on to a petty jury and which might be dismissed out of hand. Originally they "presented," *i.e.* made a formal statement of, anything amiss in their neighbourhood, from a broken bridge to a notorious gang of thieves, and were allowed to take steps to redress what they found wrong. Thus they possessed both fiscal and judicial powers. Their members were taken almost exclusively from the "country gentleman" class.

approbation. The raising of money for the purpose, and the arrangements for actually carrying out the work, were left to a amall staff of permanent officials, and, as soon as the trials and the "presentment" business were over, the Grand Jury dispersed, not to reassemble for at least another three months.

The great objections to this system were its lack of continuity and the absence of any proper supervision. Between one assize and another the permanent officials, the County Treasurer, Secretary, and so on, were quite uncontrolled. Even when the Grand Jury met, it was a more or less haphazard assemblage, depending very much for the character of its members on the disposition of the sheriff who selected the panel. If he wished to have a certain measure carried he could fill the Grand Jury with his supporters. Almost every year there was a new sheriff. Accordingly, the jury was never long composed of the same individuals, and could seldom acquire sufficient knowledge of local affairs to detect malpractices, even if it were sincerely anxious to do so. The judges, too, were mere "strangers in the land," staying only a few days in each town, and could not effectively inspect works or audit accounts. Under these circumstances "Grand Jury jobbing" became a byword. Whatever progress was made in the Irish counties was effected rather despite than with the assistance of the Grand Juries. It will be shown later that even worse conditions prevailed in the municipalities. In neither quarter was there any

serious attempt at reform until after the close of the period under consideration.

As regards national administration, however, it may be said that the records show a decided advance in public morality, a desire to remove all useless excrescences and anomalies from the service of the State, and to raise the calibre of those employed therein by making them feel that they were members of an honourable profession to whom much was conceded, and from whom much would be expected. The complicated financial system, which was the offspring of war necessities, was simplified as much as possible, and some of the taxing departments, as, for instance, the Stamp Office, began to diminish in importance. Again, the State made up for its retrogression on the economic side by an advance in the domain of social reform. Again and again in these pages it will be found endeavouring to promote the personal well-being of the masses. The labouring man becomes increasingly the object of the solicitude of statesmen, while the trader, to his own considerable content and advantage, is left to "gang his ain gait," neither aided nor hampered by Government. Throughout the nineteenth century this tendency has manifested itself more and more in Ireland, with the result that, whether for good or evil, the State has come to have a tremendous influence in all the workings of Irish life. In such matters, for instance, as higher education and land purchase, to name but two of its activities, it is

discharging functions which are quite outside the scope of State action in Great Britain. Perhaps this is the reason why agitation directed against the present form of government seems to grow weaker year by year. It is not now a mere garrison in a citadel, liable to be dislodged by a *coup de main;* it has its pickets and its detachments, its adherents and its (perhaps undeclared) friends and supporters, throughout the country. With all its faults, too, it is manifestly trying to win the confidence of the people, and to act impartially as between man and man, party and party, creed and creed. It is no easy task to terminate a vendetta and blot out the memory of past wrongs. Yet when one compares 1801 with 1901, or even 1798 with 1882, it is impossible to deny that very considerable progress has been made towards this most desirable end. The State is not now regarded as the enemy; perhaps it will soon be recognised as the friend.

CHAPTER VIII

LAW AND ORDER

The writer to whose lot it falls to describe the administration of the law in Ireland at any period, is confronted with a task neither easy nor pleasant. Before his eyes there passes an endless series of crimes, prosecutions, and sentences, incidents in a bitter and apparently implacable guerrilla warfare between the authorities and the populace. Occasionally the strife culminates in some crowning piece of atrocity and vindictiveness committed by one side or the other. It would be easy to make partisan capital out of such a record as this, by the simple process of telling only one half of the story and omitting the other. Accordingly one set of historians fills its books with well-authenticated accounts of massacres and outrages by rebels, wholesale murder, maiming, intimidation, and the like. The opposite school omits or glozes over such occurrences as these, and directs its attention to the excesses of the magistrates and the soldiery, to the savage acts of repression, the remorseless executions, often on flimsy or perjured evidence, the frequent perversion of justice, for which the Government and its subordinates must be held responsible. But to the author

who tries to be impartial, and whose desire is to record the progress of Ireland to better things, this branch of his subject presents a sad and a perplexing picture, recalling in many respects the Bloody Assize in England or the Reign of Terror in France. It is not possible to "prophesy comfortable things"; all that remains, therefore, is to present, as far as possible, a true and unvarnished chronicle of the times, setting down nothing in malice, and recording, wherever opportunity offers, any circumstance that seems to make for the amelioration of this, the oldest of Irish ills.

The disturbing forces at the commencement of the nineteenth century were so numerous and so varied in character that it is no marvel that the masses fell under the influence of some one or other of them. The country was honeycombed with secret oath-bound societies, the members of which were bound together by some close tie, political, religious, or economic. Sometimes the motive would be the assertion of national independence by force of arms. In such cases there would be secret drillings and much correspondence with the French. A system of passwords and the like, the usual paraphernalia of the conspirator, would be devised. Proceedings like these could not be long concealed from the Government, and the authorities were always able to thwart any attempt at serious action. But nevertheless, though the societies were ineffective for any practical purpose, they were able to keep their districts in a

BEGGAR'S BADGE

UNITED IRISHMAN'S MEDAL

For descriptions see p. xx.

state of perpetual turbulence. Magistrates would be shot at, houses raided at night in search of arms, obnoxious persons or suspected spies maltreated or murdered, and an incessant state of alarm kept up.

In other parts, especially where rival religious denominations were fairly equally balanced, as was the case along the borders of Ulster, a peculiarly ignorant and bloodthirsty form of fanaticism manifested itself. Under the title of Orangemen and Ribbonmen, the lower ranks among the Protestants and Roman Catholics banded themselves together for mutual support and protection. Creed was the line of cleavage, the Orange order being restricted to Protestants and the Ribbon to Catholics.[1] These organisations had their passwords and signals like the political societies, with which indeed they had many points in common, "Orange principles" being synonymous with loyalty and Ribbonism with disaffection. In order to show the nature of these societies and the truculent disposition which they fostered, a few extracts from a typical form of the oath taken on entering the Ribbon Society are quoted here :—

"I will aid and assist the French or any other power that are endeavouring to free us from the tyrannical laws of George IV. I will be ready at

[1] When the Ribbon societies were put down, Catholics were suspected of utilising the secret organisation of Freemasonry for the purpose of meeting and combining against the Orangemen. In some accounts of these disturbances the antagonism is between Orangemen and "Freemasons."

the shortest notice to aid and assist in collecting money and arms to put this our grand object into execution. I will spare neither person nor property of the Protestant heretics who are trampling this our cross under foot and deny our blessed communion, and nothing but sickness or death shall prevent me from exerting my skill in forwarding this system from parish to parish, until we are all united in a sure bond which will enable us to free us (*sic*) from the bonds of slavery which we daily labour under."

Nor was it only one side that was guilty of this kind of bloodthirsty foolishness. The Orangeman swore, for his part, to support the throne and the "Protestant Ascendancy," to assist brother Orangemen and not suffer them to be beaten or abused, not to admit Roman Catholics to the order, and while not seeking cause of conflict with persons of that religion, to wage a furious vendetta if provoked. The wording of the last-mentioned clause is "not to give a Roman Catholic any offence unless he offend me, and then I will use my utmost endeavours to shed the last drop of his blood." The embittering influence of religious divisions was increased enormously by such organisations as these. Periodically, the hatred thus engendered found vent in tremendous pitched battles, which took place at fairs or in market towns, where the opposing parties met and fought until one side or the other was driven from the field. Many lives were lost at such times, for the combatants often numbered a thousand men

on either side, and though the weapon used at the commencement might be the comparatively innocuous shillelagh, the day usually ended with the indiscriminate employment of scythes, pitchforks and even muskets.[1]

But perhaps the most cruel and dastardly of all were the societies that owed their origin to some economic grievance connected with land or labour. Tithes, excessive rents, low wages, dear provisions, all caused popular resentment, which manifested itself in acts of ferocity towards those who were held responsible for these evils. The names varied from place to place, and were often fantastic; one county was plagued with "Caravats and Shanavests," another with "Moll Doyle and her Children." But the methods employed were much the same everywhere —murder, mutilation, incendiarism, violence of every sort. The "Thrashers" took obnoxious persons out of their beds at night and beat them within an inch of their lives. The "Carders" were so called from their horrible practice of "carding," or, in other words, half flaying, their victims.[2] "Houghing" was not infrequent.

[1] There is a fine description of a fight of this kind in Carleton's "Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry."

[2] "Carding" was an operation performed on raw wool in order to break it up into strands suitable for spinning. The instrument used was like a hairbrush, the bristles being represented by short lengths of iron wire. It may be guessed in what condition the human back would be after a vigorous "carding" by angry men.

Then, again, the collection of the Customs and Excise gave rise to perpetual broils with smugglers and illicit distillers. Some districts were practically a sanctuary for those who wished to infringe the revenue laws, and the entrance of soldiers or officials was resisted to the death. If the troops did come, no one dare shelter or assist them for fear of injury to his person or his property. Every seizure entailed a riot, an attempt at rescue, and a sort of rear-guard action all the way back to headquarters. And finally, as if there were not already sufficient incentives to strife, the people were often ranged into local factions, Egans against Caseys or Flynns against Walshes, and fought as desperately with each other as if the fate of kingdoms was at stake. The original cause of these feuds could seldom be traced. Perhaps, fifty years before, the ancestral Egan had quarrelled with the ancestral Casey over the boundary of a piece of land or the ownership of a sheep. Relations and friends took up the feud, which went on for generation after generation, continually inflamed by fresh memories of beatings and insults given and received, until at last, though the first offence might long have been forgotten, it became a tradition in each family to hate the members of the other and to engage them in fight whenever opportunity offered.

The weakness of the administration in country districts rendered it very difficult to cope with disorder of any kind. The Grand Juries maintained a

few, a very few, policemen,[1] it appears, but they were, like the town watchmen, old, timid, and incapable, more inclined to hide in time of danger than to thrust themselves forward between angry mobs. They had no particular discipline or organisation, and are seldom even mentioned in the records. So far as can be made out, their sole functions were to assist the sheriff occasionally, and to deal with such minor offenders as could be relied on not to give too much trouble to their captors. For the rest, they acted on the principles of the immortal Dogberry.

The preservation of the peace and the arrest of offenders really devolved on the Justices of the Peace, who were, as a rule, country gentlemen of the ordinary type, and, naturally, seldom possessed that peculiar combination of qualities which goes to make a good magistrate. They did not know, and could hardly be expected to know, the manifold intricacies of the law under which they acted. Consequently they were continually straining their powers and doing illegal things. One magistrate, for instance, in his anxiety to rid his district of a worthless female, actually had her kidnapped and put on board a vessel sailing to America, whence she returned and successfully prosecuted him for abduction. Another committed offenders to Galway gaol on a mere verbal direction, without any formal charge or trial.

[1] These were the Baronial Police, familiarly known as the "ould Barneys." The only branch of police work in which they figured was searching for stolen goods. They were few in number, wore no particular uniform, and were subject to no supervision.

Besides their mistakes through ignorance, the magistrates were often led astray by passion or prejudice. As a class they failed to show that judicial impartiality and detachment of mind which ought to characterise those who administer the law. They were, as a rule, members of the landowning class, a fair proportion being clergymen of the Established Church. They were, therefore, in the very nature of things bound to take a partisan view of the religious and agrarian questions which were convulsing Ireland. They could not suddenly lay aside their opinions and robe themselves in impartiality before they mounted the bench. How could a landlord be a fair judge in a case concerning rent, or a rector in a dispute over tithes? In such matters the local Justices of the Peace were often *plus royaliste que le roi.* They were always demanding stronger measures and wider powers. The Government had perpetually to interpose to restrain these overvehement persons. Even Peel, who was by no means a kid-gloved administrator, had to issue a circular pointing out the necessity of giving specific instances of outrages, as proved by affidavit, before calling on Government for extraordinary measures of repression.[1]

A few of the more flagrant instances of magisterial tyranny and ineptitude may be quoted here to illustrate what has been said. In a northern county in 1797, a man whom the patrol had encountered

[1] Letter of April 21, 1815.

under suspicious circumstances late at night was cut down and killed by their leader, for no other reason than that he "returned a short answer" when counselled to keep better hours for the future. In the south a magistrate was found petty enough to wreak his vengeance even on the dead. In some midnight outrage the assailants had been pretty roughly handled, and when, a few days later, a young man of the neighbourhood died rather suddenly and mysteriously from fever, many were found to ascribe his death to wounds rather than disease. Accordingly, after the funeral had taken place, the magistrate came down with a strong force, disinterred the remains, and took them away, despite the father's protests, to be buried in Kilkenny Gaol, on the grounds that the deceased was a felon and deserved only a felon's burial. A clergyman who had been appointed provost of Sligo closed the theatre there altogether, because he conceived the announcement of a play called *The Hypocrite* was intended as a satire on himself and his Puritanical followers.

Again, the magistrates, though fierce in their support of some of the laws, were often apathetic or even hostile to the enforcement of others. In many counties it was extremely difficult to obtain a conviction for smuggling or illicit distilling, these being practices in which the local gentry were concerned or from which they reaped some personal advantage.[1]

[1] For example, even if they did not take an active part in smuggling, as was the case in some remote districts, they were not

Moreover, their personal quarrels often brought the administration of the law to a standstill. If two magistrates were at enmity, one would often take a malicious delight in bailing out the prisoners whom the other had been chasing for weeks and had been at the greatest possible pains to arrest. Again, indolence or timidity prevented many from properly discharging their functions. It needed very considerable hardihood to face the daily terror of assassination, which hung like the sword of Damocles over the "active magistrate." His was indeed an arduous and a thankless task. It involved much weary watching and patrolling, much disagreeable spying and bribing, great hazard of life and limb. It was extremely difficult to obtain a conviction, even when an arrest had been successfully brought about; for the vengeance of the prisoner's associates, though it could not always reach the magistrate in his mansion, was certain to fall with tenfold fury on those of their own class who had turned informer.

The procurement, protection, and support of witnesses was the most unpleasant side of an unpleasant business. The promise of high reward or of pardon to the less guilty accomplices often led men to brave the odium and the risk of becoming a "crown witness," but this course inevitably led to ostracism and exile, if not worse. No informer's life was safe for a minute if he stayed in his native place; he

averse to purchasing cheap smuggled goods, while, on the other hand, the profit of "potheen"-making enabled their tenants to pay high rents.

could get neither work nor lodging, for no one dared provide him with these necessaries; he had to become a pensioner, for the time being, of the State, and was usually lodged in gaol or some other place of safe-keeping, partly for his own security, partly to prevent him from coming in contact with the prisoner's friends, who might be relied on to use their best endeavours to induce him, by bribes, threats, or entreaties, to retract his testimony or absent himself from the trial. When the case was over he had almost invariably to fly from the country, taking his wife and family with him; for often the angry mob, baulked of their vengeance on the man himself, struck at him through his relations.[1] To become a crown witness was to range oneself in the ranks of a class as much hated and scorned by the Irish masses as the "publicans" in the service of Rome were by the Jews. Accordingly these persons were as a rule drawn from a reckless and evil-living class, open to the suspicion of having perjured themselves for the Government gold. There was much "hard swearing" in such cases, both for the defence and the prosecution, and there is not the least doubt that there were frequent miscarriages of justice, in the shape of wrongful convictions and undeserved acquittals.

The whole system of local administration of jus-

[1] This seems incredible, but it is absolutely true. The informer involved his family in a blood feud which spared neither sex, age, nor infancy, and was known to descend to even the third generation.

tice required a radical reform. However, the policy of the State for many years was curiously vacillating and tentative. Special remedies were devised to cope with particular evils. At one time fines and penalties were heaped up, with, of course, little or no result, for, the executive remaining as weak as before, offenders still defied arrest and mocked at the heavy sentences as much as they had done at the light. An attempt was made, for instance, to check illicit distilling by imposing a sharp fine on all the inhabitants of the townland[1] where such practices were shown to have been carried on. But this measure had little effect until special armed bodies, the Revenue Police and the Preventive Water Guard, were established, having as their sole purpose the detection of offenders against the Revenue laws, whether in the mountain recesses where the distiller worked, or along the sea-coast where the smuggler hovered, seeking his chance to run in to the shore.

But the defects of a faulty administration, which depended for its efficiency on the personal characteristics of haphazard country gentlemen, and accordingly alternated between an extreme laxity and an odious degree of oppression not far short of absolute tyranny, were nowhere more felt than in dealing with the politico-agrarian disturbances, which are never completely absent from Irish life. Curiously enough, too, the whole structure of law and order

[1] The townland is an administrative unit peculiar to Ireland. It is a subdivision of the parish.

in the rural districts of Ireland at present is a development and extension of measures originally intended as a temporary expedient for the pacification of these disturbed regions.

By an Act of 1787,[1] steps had been taken to provide officers of judicial training and temperament to direct and control the local justices. These were the "Assistant Barristers," who, from their superior knowledge and experience, soon came to have a commanding influence in the execution of the law in the counties in which they were located. They were usually elected to the chair by the non-professional magistrates with whom they were associated. The innovation was found to work satisfactorily and was soon extended to the whole of Ireland. The Assistant Barristers gradually came to be entrusted in their own persons with the wide judicial functions which had formerly been assigned to the sheriff or the time-honoured periodical assemblies of county magistrates at quarter sessions. The powers of the present County Courts are, in the main, only an expansion of those exercised by the Assistant Barristers.[2]

As regards what is known as summary jurisdiction a similar development may be traced. It was found that, where magistrates could meet and consult, even were it only by twos and threes, the decisions come to were wiser than those of single individuals

[1] 27 Geo. III., c. 40.

[2] Their official title became subsequently "Chairman of Quarter Sessions," and eventually "County Court Judge."

acting on their own responsibility.[1] Accordingly, by an Act of 1796,[2] the holding of "petty sessions," to consist of not less than two justices, was authorised in "proclaimed" districts, *i.e.* districts which the Lord Lieutenant by proclamation had declared to be in such a state of disorder as to require special treatment. The course thus indicated was found advantageous, and in process of time settled into a definite custom, without, so far as can be seen, any further definite enactment on the subject being passed.

The next step was to carry the principle of administration by trained and responsible officers into the smaller subdivisions of the county, which were naturally too numerous and remote to receive the Assistant Barristers' attention, and had hitherto been left to "active" individuals or to small groups of magistrates assembled in petty sessions. The Assistant Barrister's functions were rather judicial than executive; his duty was rather to punish the offender than to prevent the offence. Accordingly, in 1814, Peel carried an Act for the appointment of "Superintending Magistrates" in disturbed districts.[1] These new officers were given a salary (£700) sufficient to place them in a good position socially. They were to hold the commission of the peace for the county to which they were for the time being appointed, and the local justices were ordered to

[1] The arbitrary proceedings recorded a few pages back were in each case the actions of individual magistrates.

[2] 36 Geo. III., c. 20.

[3] 54 Geo. III., c. 131.

SIR ROBERT PEEL

transmit information to them as soon as it was received, and generally to lend them all possible assistance. Under each superintending magistrate's control was to be placed a police force of not more than fifty men, all appointed by the Lord Lieutenant, though paid by the Grand Jury. It is manifest from the wording of the Act that these magistrates, with their special powers and their attendant posse of policemen, were intended to be moved about, like "mobile columns" in the Boer War, from place to place, wherever their services might seem to be required. But that which had been intended to be temporary and occasional soon became permanent. The advantage of having in every county a professional magistrate, not liable to be swayed by every breath of party spirit and personal prejudice, was soon perceived. The first appointments were given to men of a good type, able and energetic, but devoid of the fatal Irish tendency to rush into extremes. They seem to have acquired almost immediately a remarkable prestige. The police forces which they organised were efficient, and appear to have struck a certain dismay into the hearts of the turbulent.

The familiar nicknames of "bobby" and "peeler" will long keep fresh in the popular memory the connection of Sir Robert Peel's name with the first properly manned and equipped police force in Ireland.[1] But it is not so well known that the

[1] It may be interesting to trace the further development of the police system. In 1822 it was organised into four great divisions,

founding of the police force was only a by-product, so to speak, of the founding, by the same man, of another celebrated Irish institution, the "resident magistracy." Certainly each has had a remarkable effect on the peace of the country. It may safely be said that their presence and their activity have throughout the nineteenth century robbed disaffection of its menace to the State, and gradually accustomed a hot-headed and violent-tempered race to curb itself within legal limits.[1] And, politics apart, the practically universal esteem and respect in which both are held shows that they cannot be the mere engines of tyranny which some people consider them.

There is evidence to show that Peel, in his organisation of the police and resident magistracy in the Irish counties, was not uninfluenced by the precedent set up by one of his predecessors in dealing with the capital. During his short, but not unproductive, tenure of the Chief Secretaryship, Sir Arthur Wellesley, afterwards famous as the Duke of Wellington, had put the Dublin police on a new footing. Before that time the peace of the city had been mainly entrusted to bodies of watchmen, appointed, paid, and

one for each province, under the control of four provincial Inspectors-General. In 1836 centralisation went a step further. The provincial bodies were thrown into one force under a single Inspector-General for the whole of Ireland. See Acts 3 Geo. IV. c. 103, and 6 Wm. IV., c. 13.

[1] Compare, for instance, even boycotting and cattle-driving with the awful murders, maimings, and torture of the early nineteenth century.

equipped by the various parishes. These numbered about five hundred men in all, and caused the community an expense which was out of all proportion to the protection they were able to give. It may easily be guessed that a number of parochial bodies of this type, acting side by side, could not exhibit any very great firmness or promptitude in dealing with crime or disorder. The watchmen were often infirm and aged persons, who had been appointed to their posts out of charity and as a sort of provision for their declining years. They were ridiculously inefficient as guardians of the peace, and were by no means inclined to hazard their persons in the pursuit of dangerous characters. As an instance of the light esteem in which they were held, it may be mentioned that rough, not to say cruel, practical jokes on the watchmen were a favourite amusement of nocturnal revellers. Although a central organisation had been set up in 1795,[1] it was not given adequate powers of control over the parish watchmen, but maintained a small separate force of its own, fifty men in all. These, however, were under better discipline than the parochial men, and seem, few as they were, to have made some impression on the enormous mass of professional crime that formed so marked a feature of Dublin life.[2]

In 1808 Wellesley increased this central force

[1] 35 Geo. III., c. 36.

[2] Such crimes as highway robbery, burglary, coining, forgery, pocket-picking, were much more prevalent than they are now.

and gave it complete control of the parish watchmen.[1] The city was divided into six divisions, to each of which three magistrates were assigned. A special provision was introduced into the Act in order to secure professional experience on the bench at each of the divisional courts. One of the three persons to be appointed, it was ordered, should in each case be a barrister of a certain standing. In deference to the ancient rights of the Dublin Corporation as regards the administration of justice within the limits of the city, that body was allowed to nominate a proportion of the new magistrates. A chief magistrate was appointed, whose headquarters was to be with the Castle division. Each of the divisions had a certain number of constables permanently attached to it, acting under the control of its own magistrates. Besides these there were horse and foot patrols to the number of about one hundred and twenty men. The watch was divided into a number of small squads, each under the control of an officer called a "watch constable."

The system of preserving the peace of the city deserves a little mention. The watchmen, to the number of five or six hundred men, were dispersed through the city at fixed stations, each station being responsible for the peace of its own immediate neighbourhood. The "peace officers" from the various divisions patrolled the streets at irregular intervals so as to prevent disturbers from being

[1] 48 Geo. III., c. 140.

able to count too definitely on the absence or presence of the police at any time, and also, as was no less important, to keep the watchmen on the alert. In case of serious need, the central authorities could call the watchmen out of their districts to give assistance. Thus they had at their disposal a total force of eight hundred men, quite sufficient, when properly organised and disciplined, to cope with any emergency likely to arise. The new force seems to have exercised a good influence in the detection and discouragement of crime.

The higher courts of law are too important and complicated a subject to be dealt with by a mere layman, but perhaps two of their chief defects may be touched on. They were tedious and costly beyond all measure. Of course, delay is always more or less inevitable in the law; it is of the very essence of judgment to take time for consideration. A decision given without full and patient hearing of both sides would be worthless. And, since time is money, delay necessarily involves expense. But there is evidence to show that both the delay and the expense were deliberately increased by some court officials for their own private advantage. They appear to have frequently compelled litigants to duplicate affidavits and the like, simply for the sake of pocketing extra fees. The charges were most exorbitant, and the whole system of procedure required a thorough overhauling.

But much as the litigant suffered at the hands of

the law, his hardships were as nothing compared with those of the convict. A Commission of Inquiry stated it as their opinion that there was no offence, outside those punishable by death or transportation, for which six weeks in Newgate Gaol, Dublin, would not be a more than adequate penalty. Prison history can never be a cheerful or an inspiriting subject, but the state of the gaols in Ireland in the early nineteenth century exhibits many of the characteristics of an Inferno. A modern convict is subjected to discipline and labour; he is carefully isolated from his fellows and is given every possible chance of improvement and reformation. The conditions in which he lives during his stay in gaol are, morally and physically, as healthy as they can be consistent with the safe custody of the criminal.

In the old gaols, on the contrary, there was much laxity, neglect and cruelty in the treatment of the prisoners. They were allowed to associate freely with each other during the day, and the old offenders were given an opportunity, which they were not slow to utilise, for corrupting and depraving their less hardened fellows. The gaolers themselves bear testimony that half the crimes that took place in Dublin were planned in Kilmainham or Newgate. The prison, instead of being a check on crime, was simply a nursery of criminals.[1] In some prisons there was no regular chaplain, and few possessed a

[1] The procuress was able to ply her evil trade among the younger inmates of the female gaols.

schoolmaster. Intoxicants were smuggled in; games of chance were carried on more or less openly, and there were occasional orgies of drunkenness, quarrelling and insubordination, the suppression of which taxed the utmost energies of the warders. Sometimes the disturbance rose to such a height that the soldiers of the military guard had to fire on the convicts to bring them to submission. Scandals of other kinds were not infrequent. There were cases where female convicts gave birth to children, whose parentage, from the circumstances of the case, must be assigned to either the gaolers or male fellow-prisoners. There was a great deal of cruelty. Half the convicts had ulcers on their legs, produced by the chafing of the irons they wore.

There was a lack of proper supervision of the warders and turnkeys. The welfare of the prisoners was left to depend too much on the disposition of these officials, most of whom were badly paid and came from the lower classes. Accordingly there was much extortion. The gaoler was entitled to certain fees and could detain the prisoner, even after his term had expired, until he was paid his dues. Many convicts, unable through poverty to provide the necessary sum, languished in prison for months, and even years, after they should have been discharged. The gaoler, too, was the prisoner's agent for the purchase of food and clothes, neither of which necessaries were provided in adequate measure by the State. Some counties allowed ten pounds of bread

a week, but there was no provision for varying the diet. The ration was sold or exchanged through the medium of the turnkey, who was naturally in a position to drive a hard bargain with men so completely in his power. There was no distinctive convict clothing. The prisoners wore their own private clothes, replacing them, if they had the means, from time to time by suits brought in by friends or procured through the gaolers. The poorer class could not always replenish their wardrobe in this way, and were sometimes forced to wear throughout a long sentence the clothes they had worn at the time of arrest. Sometimes sheer necessity drove them to tailoring on their own behalf, and stories, that would be humorous were they not so pathetic, are told of coats being made out of old sacks, and breeches out of the striped ticking of a mattress.

There was a general listless idleness through the gaol, for there was no compulsion to work, although some men, it is true, plied their trades there in order to earn money to alleviate the hardships of their lot.[1] They cooked their food and took their meals in whatever manner and at whatever time they thought best. The sleeping accommodation was miserable, and often was no more than a " bedding down " of loose straw. The buildings were, for the most part, old and insanitary. Frequently some part of the ancient defences of a city—as, for instance, Reginald's Tower

[1] In one prison coining was actually carried on for some time without being detected by the authorities.

at Waterford, or the arch of the old North Gate at Cork—was utilised for the purpose. The windows were sometimes left unglazed, exposing the convicts to the inclemency of the weather. Some of the cells were underground; a few were partly under water. The prisons were terribly overcrowded, especially when a long interval had elapsed since the last sailing of the convict ships for Botany Bay. This huddling together amid insanitary conditions gave rise to epidemics of gaol-fever, which carried off many victims. Yet this congestion was in some sort a positive advantage to the prisoners, since it facilitated their escape. If, as sometimes happened, several men had to pass the night in a single cell, they often found it easy, by concerted action, to work their way through the barriers that lay between them and liberty. Once clear of the gaol precincts and rid of their fetters, they could mingle with the general public and defy detection. In the absence of a distinctive prison dress, one of the chief difficulties in the way of an escaping prisoner was removed. From some of the weaker and older gaols the convicts escaped in batches of ten or a dozen at a time.[1]

Perhaps no class of prisoner deserves more sym-

[1] The methods employed were sometimes ingenious. A common device was to stop up the drains with paper or rags. The authorities were obliged to tear up the floor to find where the stoppage was, and in the general confusion produced by the presence of workmen, there would be an opportunity of getting away, or, at all events, of obtaining a knowledge of the structure of the gaol that might be useful afterwards.

pathy than the debtor. In one respect he was worse off than the felon, for his term of imprisonment was indefinite. Even for so small a sum as ten shillings a man might be flung into prison, where he might have to remain until his debt was paid off. Many, overwhelmed by their liabilities and destitute of friends, remained helplessly and hopelessly in prison year after year. The debtors were perhaps better treated than the felons, but still they suffered great hardships. In many places they stood at the grated doorways of their prisons and begged for charity of the passers-by. Some of the smaller towns could not support a separate prison for debtors, and so the unfortunate trader or artisan who was imprisoned for debt had to undergo the hideous experience of confinement in the same building as felons and lunatics.

About the year 1820 an improvement began to be noticeable. Successive Chief Secretaries had turned their attention to this not very attractive, but still very important subject. The county prisons were rebuilt and remodelled. And, as a check on the often negligent management of the Grand Juries, a better system of State inspection was devised. There had long been an Inspector of Prisons, but the occupant of the post was an aged and not very energetic clergyman, the last person in the world to undertake such a Herculean task as the reform of the Irish gaols. But at the next vacancy a better appointment was made, and gradually, as

the century wore on, the State took over into its own hands all the prisons, whether local or not, and in process of time developed a special department, the General Prisons Board, to deal with this section of administration. More enlightened methods came to be adopted in connection with the punishment of crime. Chief among these was the adoption of the penitentiary system. Its aims were the reformation of the criminal, especially when of tender years, and his seclusion from all harmful, and subjection to all good, influences during his period of confinement. It included in its scope also an endeavour to improve the intellect and character of the convict. Accordingly religion and education were brought to bear on the prisoner to a much greater degree than before. The schoolmaster and the chaplain became important officials. Attempts were made to implant a taste for honest industry in the mind of persons confined. They were forced to work, but were allowed to receive some reward for their labours. Discipline and order were enforced. Silence and solitude were an essential part of the new system. Perhaps in recent times these principles have been carried to excess, and prisons have become machines which crush soul and body under their iron routine. But at the time of its introduction the "penitentiary" system was the herald of a much-needed reform.

CHAPTER IX

THE MILITARY SYSTEM

In several of its features there is a very remarkable analogy between the military situation of Ireland during the Napoleonic war and that of the United Kingdom at the present time. The fear in the minds of the authorities was the same then as now, that of invasion by a Continental Power, and recourse was being had to the same expedient as at present, the organisation of local or territorial forces as a help to, or even a substitute for, the regular army. Until the battle of Trafalgar gave Great Britain an absolute and unchallenged control of the sea, both England and Ireland were continually dreading invasion. The danger was greater in the latter country, as the Government had much reason to believe that the attack from without would be aided by an insurrection from within. If the French could maintain their footing long enough to enable them to develop into a disciplined army the splendid fighting material to be found amongst the disaffected peasantry, they might make themselves masters of the whole island, and so acquire an admirable base from which to harry British commerce and menace

the security of England and Scotland. On the other hand, if they landed in England, they could reckon on no popular support, and would have to win every foot of their way against a determined resistance. Moreover, the lonely west coast of Ireland presented a series of fine harbours, well adapted to the landing of troops swiftly and secretly, and had the further advantage that, being remote from the military stations of Ireland and the great naval ports in the Channel, it could not be adequately patrolled on either its seaward or its landward side.

However, the experiment of invasion was tried several times and always ended in failure, partly owing to the naval shortcomings of the French, partly to the failure of the Irish to give them the support they had counted on, and partly, it must be confessed, to pure good fortune. Atmospheric phenomena, winds, storms, and fogs, played a conspicuous part in the defence of Ireland. Some expeditions were intercepted soon after starting and were crushed at once; others eluded the vigilance of the British cruisers only to be dispersed by stress of weather, so as to fall ship by ship into the hands of their enemies; others reached their destination safely, only to find themselves compelled to put to sea again, as the weather was too stormy to allow an attempt at disembarkation. Delay in such a case was dangerous, for every hour that passed brought British ships of war to the neighbourhood, and the invading squadron might, if it stayed too long,

suffer shipwreck or find its retreat cut off by a superior force. Moreover, in the event of an engagement, the French fleet, with a rugged and unknown coast at its rear, would be in an unfavourable position for manœuvring.

In only one case did the enemy actually land his troops and make his way some distance towards the capital. Fortunately for the Government, this successful invasion, which would have coincided with a dangerous rebellion had it come two months earlier, was not aided by any considerable popular rising, and the small numbers of the enemy rendered his defeat an easy matter. On the 22nd August 1798 the French General Humbert landed at Killala with about 1000 men and marched into Connaught, defeating at Castlebar, with ridiculous ease, a large body of troops, mainly militia, sent to arrest his progress. But his successes ended there. The people remained unmoved, and the viceroy, Lord Cornwallis, a man of great military experience, concentrated such overwhelming forces on the threatened quarter that Humbert was overtaken at Ballinamuck in County Longford and obliged to surrender. Only seventeen days had elapsed since he landed, but he had made such good use of his time that, at the moment of his capitulation, he was no more than four days' march from Dublin. Had he been backed by a larger force of French regulars, or received any considerable help from the peasantry, it might have gone hard with the British power in Ireland.

It is no wonder, therefore, that the military history of the period is full of preparations for, and safeguards against, invasion; but there seems to have been a great diversity of opinion as to the best methods to be adopted. One school of thought on the subject advocated a policy not unlike that of Fabius Cunctator. The troops were to harass and annoy the enemy, but not to engage in a general action until they had worn down his strength or had him at a palpable disadvantage. At the same time the country was to be denuded of everything that might assist a foreign army. Cattle were to be driven away, horses and carts commandeered, stores of provisions destroyed, roads and bridges rendered impassable, so that the progress of the invading army might be hampered and delayed as much as possible. In view of the adoption of such a measure, the authorities set on foot in the years 1803 and 1804 a very remarkable inquiry into the condition of the country. The governors of the counties were directed to obtain, through inspectors and superintendents in the parishes, a number of details as to the amount of live stock, provisions, conveyances, boats, &c., to be found in their districts, and to report the result to Dublin Castle. Some of their returns are still extant. At the same time the names of persons ready to act as guides or drivers were carefully registered.

Another section of military opinion favoured the construction of fortifications and defensible works.

Hardwicke, the viceroy who succeeded Cornwallis, was instructed, as one of his first duties, to survey and report on the state of the existing fortifications.[1] This school, too, saw some of its ideas carried into execution; for instance, among other things, the curious expedient of the martello towers. These were erected in large numbers and at a heavy expense along the coast of Ireland, in order, apparently, to hinder a landing. This may be called the "Chinese Wall" theory of defence. It is not easy to see what advantage there was in splitting up the army into the small detachments that would be required to garrison these places. The single martello nearest to the enemy's landing-place could offer no very effective resistance to his advance, while all the other posts of this type were detaining and occupying to no purpose men who might be badly needed elsewhere. They were often placed in very remote situations, where they could not keep in touch with any large body of troops in their neighbourhood. Their erection, it may be said, was on the whole a futile and extravagant measure. They might certainly have been useful as watch-towers, but were quite useless for any other purpose.[2] Their great number and the peculiarities of their situations would have rendered their defence a difficult matter. As it happened, they were never put to the test, but

[1] Lord Hardwicke's instructions, April 30, 1801.

[2] In some places they are called, even to this day, "Billy Pitt's Folly."

would probably have been found inefficient. There seems, too, to have been some notion of fortifying the line of the Shannon and so preventing an enemy from crossing from Connaught into Leinster. The land defences were also to be assisted by gunboats of light draught, which would be able to cruise along the coast close inshore and ascend the estuaries of the rivers.

A third school pinned its faith to the improvement of communications and a development of mobility in the defending force. A number of signal stations were erected on points of vantage, and a system of "expresses" organised along the chief roads, in order that important news might reach the capital as soon as possible. On one road, that from Dublin to Galway, the "telegraph" was brought into use.[1] The available forces were, by this theory, to be concentrated in large masses at central positions, from which they might readily be marched to a threatened point. Auxiliary troops should be instructed beforehand as to their duties in the event of an invasion, and should be practised in the execution of such tasks, so that, when the

[1] This is, of course, not the electric telegraph, but a system of long-distance signalling, either by flags or a species of semaphore. A chain of stations was established along a particular route, each being in sight of a similar post on either side. Thus a message could, given fine weather, be speedily passed along from one station to the next until it reached the end of the line. There was a telegraph of this kind from the Admiralty Office in London to Deal, and it is said that a message could be passed along in twenty minutes.

occasion arose, they would without friction or delay take the place of the regular troops or act as their assistants. This was probably the ideal method, but the circumstances of Ireland, political and social, rendered it difficult of attainment.

Owing to the lack of a proper police system, the army was continually being called on to perform duties that should naturally have been discharged by a constabulary; in many districts the law could not be maintained save by a display of overwhelming force. The Customs men dared not make a seizure unless they were supported by at least twenty or thirty bayonets; the gauger was not safe unless under similar protection; the bailiff, the sheriff's officer, and the tithe-proctor hardly ventured to stir without an escort. And, again, disturbances of various kinds, now dealt with promptly and effectively by the Royal Irish Constabulary, were constantly requiring the attention of the military. Party or faction fights, potato riots, trade union tumults, fiercely fought elections, outbursts of incendiarism or mob violence—all these forms of disturbance were continually recurring, and could not always be allayed by the personal influence of the magistrate, unbacked by physical force. And, besides, it was necessary to keep a very sharp eye on local disaffection all over Ireland, lest it might suddenly break out into rebellion. Soldiers were always being needed for such duties as arresting and escorting prisoners, searching for arms, guarding prisons, and so forth.

In 1821 and 1822, during a period of disorder in the south, the army was so overburdened with this class of work that it was found necessary to enrol the pensioners, who had been discharged after the peace, so that they might be available if called on.

Owing to the great number of demands from various quarters for the presence of troops, the Commanders-in-Chief found themselves unable to concentrate their forces at strategic points. Dublin was probably the only station where a considerable body of troops ready for service could be found. The army in Ireland was for the most part split up into small detachments, spread all over the country, sometimes billeted out on the inhabitants, sometimes quartered in a collection of mud cabins dignified by the name of a barracks. The result was, of course, a weakening of discipline and a relaxation of military efficiency. It is not to be expected that a corporal's guard, stationed thirty miles from the headquarters of its regiment, will long observe all the irksome regulations it submitted to when still under the eye of its colonel.

To this lack of discipline may probably be ascribed the numerous outrages which disgraced the British army in Ireland during the earlier part of this period.[1] It is significant that the weaker the discipline in a regiment, the more apt it was to get

[1] It must be confessed, too, that the troops were subject to considerable provocations. In some districts, for instance, there was an abominable practice of waylaying stray soldiers and "houghing" or hamstringing them.

out of hand in this respect. The regular troops had a much better record than the militia or yeomanry, and the newly arrived regiments showed themselves courteous and considerate in comparison with those which had been a long while stationed in the country.

Perhaps it will be well here, while dealing with the *morale* of the army, to describe in some detail the character of the *personnel.* The greater proportion, perhaps, of the rank and file consisted of much the same types as are to be found there now—the roving and adventurous, who were attracted by the glamour of the life, and that other less romantic class of persons who drifted into the army because they could find no better employment. But the authorities, either because of the necessities of the time or because they did not require a particularly high standard in men destined to be "food for powder," adopted an attitude towards the army that would provoke the bitterest resentment if it were persisted in to-day. They turned both the military and naval forces of the Crown into depots for the reception and detention of criminals. Time and again the gaols were ransacked for recruits for the army. It was a common practice to grant a free pardon to criminals on condition of enlisting, and especially was this the case when the guilt of the prisoners, though strongly suspected, could not perhaps be proved to the satisfaction of a jury. Under the circumstances they were allowed to choose

whether they would enter the army or submit to a trial, and almost invariably preferred the former alternative. The result of this policy was a distinct prominence of what might be called the ruffianly element in the ranks of the army. Undoubtedly these recruits often became excellent soldiers and, under the influence of military discipline, cast off their evil habits; but nevertheless the whole proceeding brought a discredit on the army from which it has never completely recovered. There is abundance of evidence to show the low repute in which the private soldier and the common seaman were held at the time, and though a century has passed in the meantime, the prejudice still exists, and its complete removal would be one of the greatest benefits that could be conferred not merely on the army but on the empire.

Moreover, such methods of filling the army were full of danger, especially in Ireland, where the convicts so drafted into the army were often persons who were being punished for acts of rebellion or disaffection. It was a hazardous step to put such men into positions where they might do much harm by sapping the fidelity of their comrades. There is no doubt that political emissaries did enter the ranks, so as to get in touch with the soldiers, and that some of the frequent mutinies and desertions which mark the period were due to their secret influence. However, the Government endeavoured to secure itself against such dangers by taking care not to

send too many offenders into a single corps, and if possible to send them on some distant foreign service, preferably to Africa or India. Strange to say, the ex-rebels often became excellent and devoted soldiers when removed from their home associations. The records show numerous cases of letters from commanding officers, asking that old soldiers in their regiments, who had been originally sent into the army from a gaol, might be allowed to return to Ireland on the expiration of their term of service. Often the letter goes on to mention that the person in question has distinguished himself in the field and has been promoted more than once.

It must be remembered, too, in this connection, that although the convict recruits were all law-breakers, they were of varying degrees of criminality. For instance, a smuggler or an illicit distiller might be, and no doubt often was, a man who, apart from his illegal pursuit and the disorder it brought in its train, lived a comparatively blameless life. The same was often the case with persons guilty of agrarian disorder. They acted so, not from mere ruffianism, but from a conception of justice or patriotism which conflicted with that established by law. And again, even coming to the criminal classes properly so called, many of them were imprisoned solely because of the inhuman severity of the code. Offences now punishable by a fine or a couple of weeks' imprisonment were then made the occasion for long terms of penal servitude. The gaols were

full not merely of hardened and professional convicts, but also of people who had been guilty of a slight lapse, or had been led away by bad example. Such persons, if they entered the army, were not necessarily of a type to bring disgrace on their calling.

On the contrary, as so often happens with British institutions, the system, though essentially bad in itself, produced better results than could have been expected. The high quality of Wellington's army and Nelson's fleet, regarded as fighting machines, has been attested both by friends and enemies. And from another standpoint, that of their relations with the people around them, the regular forces of the Crown do not appear in a bad light. Apart from the savageries of 1798, which, as has been said, were mainly the work of irregular troops, militia and yeomanry, there were few cases of collision between the army and the populace. It is true that when the Catholic Emancipation struggle was at its height some over-zealous priests took to preaching against the military, and there were occasional street broils[1] between soldiers and civilians. Still, on the whole, the army was not unpopular.

[1] The greatest troubles of this kind arose with regiments which had been so long in one neighbourhood that they became tinged with the local politics, and were then removed to a region where different views prevailed; as, for instance, when a corps which had picked up many Orange recruits in Ulster was sent into the west or south. Unless the troops were confined to barracks on party anniversaries, disorder was certain. The English and Scotch soldiers were quite indifferent on such points, and so neither gave nor took offence.

However, during the Great War, there were often very few regular troops to be found in the country. They were so urgently needed to combat Napoleon's legions on the Continent that the Irish garrison, even in disturbed districts, was reduced to the lowest possible figure. And not only was this so, but the wastage of war in the fighting regiments had continually to be made good by drafts from the auxiliary forces which had taken up their duties at home. The militia and the yeomanry, but particularly the former, played the part of reserves from which the regulars drew reinforcements.

The Irish militia, by its original terms of enlistment, was not liable to serve outside Ireland. However, for many reasons, it was thought better to alter this arrangement. Although some regiments had done good service during the Rebellion, the force as a whole had not covered itself with glory. Being recruited almost entirely from the poorer classes, they were naturally susceptible to political propaganda, and could not therefore be relied on implicitly. Rebel agents were continually making attempts on their loyalty, sometimes with success. At the battle of Castlebar a large number of militiamen went over to the enemy, thereby contributing to the panic which swept away the British forces on that occasion. And even when they showed themselves faithful, their lack of discipline made them unsuitable for employment in Ireland. They were only too prone to go far beyond their orders. To entrust them

with the execution of military repressive measures was to inaugurate a regular reign of terror throughout the districts where they were quartered. If they could be moved away from home, they might be welded into an efficient and trustworthy fighting force. Accordingly, the authorities hit on the expedient of sending the greater portion of the Irish militia to do duty in Great Britain, and supplying their places with militia from thence. At first this was done by allowing regiments to volunteer for service outside their native country,[1] but subsequently the distinction between the militias of various parts of the realm was abolished and, by a statute of the year 1811,[2] all the organisations were included under one title as "Militia of the United Kingdom," with a corresponding liability to serve in any part of the United Kingdom. Thus the Government was able to interchange the militia regiments as they thought fit, without having to work up possibly recalcitrant men to the pitch of volunteering. The experiment was successful; the British militia, dispersed through the numerous garrisons of Ireland, rarely excited any ill-feeling by their actions. The Irish regiments seem to have been sent into large camps in England, where they received a more thorough training in the art of war than they could have obtained in the small stations of their own country.

After some months of drill and discipline the militiaman became so embued with the military spirit

[1] 44 Geo. III., c. 32. [2] 51 Geo. III., c. 118.

that he lost his feeling of citizenship and became absorbed in the great war machine. Accordingly, when a call for volunteers for the regular army came, the militiamen responded with far greater alacrity than they would have done prior to being embodied as a regiment. Otherwise, the enormous loss of men in the Peninsular War could not have been repaired, and Wellington could not have continued to maintain his footing in Portugal. In one year alone the Irish militia supplied 8000 volunteers to the line.[1] This was a very fine contribution, when it is considered that the strength of the home force was between 20,000 and 30,000 men, and that such demands on its loyalty were made repeatedly. In 1805, 1807, and 1809 there were special enactments for permitting militiamen to volunteer, and even in the absence of such legislation there seems to have been a steady flow of recruits from the auxiliary to the regular forces.

Of course this resulted in a depletion of the ranks of the militia, which was supplied from time to time by a "ballot," a peculiar form of conscription. When it appeared, on an inquiry into the strength of the militia, that a considerable number was wanting to complete establishment, steps were taken to fill the vacancies by balloting. The task of making up the deficiency was shared among the counties in proportion to their respective populations, and simi-

[1] Letter of Sir E. B. Littlehales to Sir Arthur Wellesley, June 3, 1808.

larly the county quotas were subdivided among the parishes or other administrative units. Lists containing the names of all men fit for military service were drawn up by the local constables, and on an appointed day lots would be drawn to decide which persons should go to complete the number required from the parish. It was permitted to any man selected by ballot to serve by deputy, if he could provide a suitable substitute; and volunteers, if any appeared, were reckoned as forming part of the quota of their respective districts. These provisions went to relieve the country somewhat of the unpleasant task of raising men by compulsion. If a parish wished to be relieved of the duty altogether, it could do so by taxing itself until a sum had been collected sufficient to procure as many substitutes as would be equal to the quota demanded from it. But it is probable that few districts were wealthy enough to resort to this expedient. On the other hand, influential persons, such as, for example, the great landlords, could often obtain enough recruits without resorting to compulsion at all. Men of this type were usually in command of the militia regiments; their friends and relatives were well represented among the officers; and accordingly there was to such individuals a strong personal inducement to maintain the strength of their corps and save their estates from the ballot by keeping up a continual supply of volunteer recruits.

There were sharp penalties for delinquency. A

heavy and a cumulative penalty was laid on counties or parishes which had failed to raise their proper quotas. Ballotted men who refused to serve or who absconded were liable to be treated as deserters. Still, on the whole, although the levying of the fines caused a good deal of complaint, it does not appear that the militia ballot was particularly unpopular. It does not seem to have provoked nearly as much resentment as the tithes. Various exemptions were made, mostly in favour of men who were efficient members of the yeomanry. Poor persons with more than three legitimate children were also exempt. When the militia was embodied, the wives and families of men actually serving thereon received from Government an allowance which was fairly liberal, considering the then standard of living. It was fixed at two shillings a week for a wife, and a shilling for each child under ten years of age, but was not allowed to go beyond a maximum of four shillings. The period of service was five years for a ballotted man, and five years, or such longer term as embodiment should continue, in the case of a volunteer or substitute. However, the men, like the soldiers of every hard-pressed nation from the days of the Roman Empire to our own times, found it much easier to enter than to leave the service. Yet, so far as can be ascertained, although there was occasional discontent, there was never any mutiny or other serious disturbance caused by alleged violation of the terms of enlistment.

It is likely, too, that had not Nelson's victory at Trafalgar relieved the British Isles from fear of invasion, there would soon have been conscription for the regular army on the same lines as for the militia. It is not generally known that a beginning had been made in this direction. By an Act of 1803 steps had been taken to raise an additional force of 10,000 men in Ireland by balloting in the counties and parishes.[1] It was to be liable for home service only, and might either be formed into separate corps or be attached to the regular army or militia. In the following year this Army of Reserve was set on a permanent basis.[2] Its numbers were fixed at 10,000 men, and any deficiencies were to be filled up by ballot. However, this experiment did not last very long. The new force was seen to be unnecessary in view of British supremacy at sea, and it was abolished in 1806.[3] During its brief existence, it too had been utilised as a recruiting ground for the army. Altogether it may be safely assumed that between 1803 and 1815 at least 150,000 men were raised in Ireland by various means and for various purposes, and that of this total more than half found their way sooner or later into the ranks of the regular army.

The militia organisation, when not embodied, was on much the same lines as at present. There was a small permanent nucleus of experienced men, officers,

[1] 43 Geo. III., c. 83. [2] 44 Geo. III., c. 74.
[3] 46 Geo. III., c. 63.

sergeants, instructors, and so on, stationed in a central position, usually the capital of the county, to which the regiment belonged. These were entrusted with the task of training the raw recruits as they presented themselves. When the regiment was embodied, as it was periodically, even in peace time, for purposes of drill and exercise, they were occupied with the still more onerous duty of welding the mass of men under their charge into a coherent and efficient whole.

Perhaps an even more remarkable body than the militia was to be found in that curious volunteer organisation, the yeomanry. It also was an outcome of the fear of invasion. According to the plan most generally approved for dealing with that eventuality, all the regular troops available were to be concentrated in stations whence they could march against an invader directly he effected a landing, and were to be assisted and supported in their operations by the militia. However, this course would denude the outlying districts of the country and give an opportunity to the disaffected of raising disturbances in the rear of the British force, and so distracting the attention of the military authorities from the problem before them. A general faced by a strong enemy in front and harassed by guerrillas along his line of communications would be in an extremely awkward position. Accordingly, in 1796 local volunteer "armed associations," as they were at first called, were raised in order to cope with disorders in their respective neighbourhoods, so as to leave the army

a free hand. The Government, as might be expected, was particularly careful about the *personnel* of these bodies. They were usually commanded by the territorial magnates, who had interested themselves in their equipment and formation, and who were expected to guarantee the loyalty and fidelity of any recruits they accepted. Most of the rank and file were of the middle class, and the predominant religion was Protestant. Roman Catholics were not excluded, however; and, indeed, in one case the name of the parish priest appears among the signatories to the original resolution under which the corps was formed.[1] Some companies contained nearly as many of the one religion as of the other. Still there was a distinct Protestant, not to say Orange, tinge throughout the yeomanry,[2] and, as the admission to corps in later times was by ballot, it was an easy matter for existing members to preserve the political complexion of their companies.

During 1796 the authorities in Dublin were inundated with offers to raise corps, the majority of which they gladly accepted. In most cases the Government supplied pay, clothing, and arms, but in others the zeal of the yeomen was such that they undertook to serve without rewards or allowances of any sort, on receiving arms and ammunition from the State armouries. It is curious to note that the

[1] This was at Aghadowey, Co. Londonderry. Letter of J. Orr and address, &c., May 18, 1798.

[2] At Bandon the local corps styled itself the "Boyne Infantry."

yeomanry of 1796, who are so execrated by Nationalist Ireland, considered themselves the natural successors of the volunteers of 1782, whose memory is much revered in the same quarter. Often a man who had served in his youth in the volunteers took an active part in raising the yeomanry. Though the old volunteer regiments were not allowed to preserve their separate existence while becoming a part of the later organisation, still their members individually were welcomed into the new yeomanry corps. At Parsonstown, on some old cannon belonging to a volunteer corps being found, it was proposed to utilise them for the training of a corps of yeomanry artillery.[1] The fact is that both bodies were called into existence by the same motive, the fear of invasion, and that the political action of the earlier force was due almost altogether to the adroit use made of it by Grattan during a dangerous crisis. Neither Grattan nor any one else could have kept the volunteers permanently in hostility to Great Britain. When Flood and others tried to lead them a step further than Grattan had done, dissensions arose which ultimately wrecked the movement. The volunteers wore, and were apparently proud to wear, the traditional British red coat; and though, when treated with injustice, they may have threatened Great Britain with rebellion, it is at least very doubtful whether they would as a body have used their weapons against English troops. Of course this is mere speculation, but there was cer-

[1] Letter of Capt. L. Parsons, March 10, 1797.

tainly a marked analogy between the volunteers and the yeomanry, differently as they behaved in matters political.[1]

The new yeomanry corps became in a short space of time a semi-military volunteer police. They were armed with the musket and bayonet and clothed, like their prototypes, in a uniform similar to that of the line. They were organised in small bodies, so as not to lose touch with local conditions. The unit was the company of forty or fifty men, not the regiment. They were allowed to keep their arms in their own possession, were bound to attend a certain proportion of drills, and to appear for occasional duty if called on by a competent authority. A number of the corps consisted entirely or in part of mounted men. As a police force they were certainly effective. The task of the magistrate in coping with disorder was facilitated by the circumstance that in almost every village, certainly in every town, he could find a body of men who could be relied on to give ready and loyal assistance. For such duties as making arrests, searching, supplying escorts and patrols, they were invaluable.

Probably it is their activity in this respect which has drawn down on them the bitter hatred of the political heirs of the party which they did so much to crush. Although half the tales which are told of

[1] The volunteers were quite as Protestant, and probably as "Orange," in their sympathies as the yeomanry. Their reviews in Dublin were held around the statue of King William III.

their cruelty and tyranny are probably not true, they certainly did not exhibit any lamb-like qualities, and must bear their full share of responsibility for the excesses of 1797 and 1798. Ireland is no country for a volunteer police. It was certainly not safe then, and is possibly not so even now, to give any Irishman full and unconstrained control over his personal or political opponents. In a land where passion and party feeling run so high, all State officials, but especially those connected with the administration of the law, should be as impartial as possible. This can only be obtained by segregating them from the general mass of the people and forming them into a professional class. The yeomanry were partisans and carried into their duties a partisan spirit, which, in conjunction with their inevitable lack of discipline, explains and accounts for the outrageous behaviour they were prone to display.

It may be conjectured that the Government, harassed as it was by lack of men to sustain the campaigns against Napoleon, had cast its eye on the yeomanry as a possible fighting force for active service. They had shown their spirit in encounters with the rebels of 1798, a collection of men whose desperate valour and skilful tactics rendered them no mean antagonists even for regular troops.[1] Also they were a numerous body, comprising in 1801 as

[1] At New Ross and Arklow, for instance, the pike proved more than a match for the bayonet, although the regulars gained the victory in the end, owing to their undisciplined opponents dispersing to plunder as soon as they thought the field was won.

many as 10,000 horse and 40,000 foot.[1] In that year attempts were made to weld together the scattered companies into some sort of coherent force. The small local units were brigaded together, so that they could in time of need be formed into battalions, and they were instructed in case of invasion to harass the enemy and endeavour to draw him into ambuscades. In 1804 circulars were issued asking the yeomanry corps if they would be willing, in event of invasion, to march outside the districts in which they had originally volunteered to act, and, in fact, to extend their service to Ireland generally. The responses were about equally divided between the affirmative and the negative.[2] In later years, however, some of the best corps were put on "permanent pay," *i.e.* embodied for an indefinite term like the militia, and, as had happened with the latter body, fell more under the influence of the military spirit and became more responsive to such appeals. In 1808 at least one corps volunteered for the Peninsula,[3] and in 1813 all were ready to serve anywhere in the United Kingdom, and some were willing to go to the Continent.[4]

It will be seen from the statements made in the course of this chapter that Ireland, weak as she may

[1] Comparatively, too, they were a cheap force; each yeoman, unless he was on permanent duty, only cost the country on an average about £5 a year. Report of Gen. Floyd, Sept. 8, 1801.

[2] Various letters, 1804.

[3] Letter of Capt. Nicolson, August 7, 1808.

[4] Various letters, 1813.

have been in other respects, was in military matters a valuable assistant to Great Britain. Although the country was in a state of discontent, the stream of recruits never slackened, and the Irish soldier, whether he wore the cocked hat of the general or the helmet of the private, did most excellent service. Wellington and several of his generals were Irishmen, and the armies in the Peninsula were to a large extent manned, provisioned, and clothed from Ireland. It is a curious circumstance, but one not without parallel in recent times, that the oppressed should have come thus readily to the help of the oppressor. However, the explanation lies in the fact that the Irish Government and a good part of the Irish nation have always been strongly Anglophile, while the hostility to Great Britain, which the rest of the population are so ready to give utterance to in words, is an uncertain and unreliable factor when it comes to action. To use a homely metaphor, "the bark" of Nationalist Ireland "is worse than its bite." And year by year the rebellious and treasonable spirit grows weaker and weaker in Irish politics. There is good reason to believe that if the United Kingdom were confronted with a serious emergency—if, say, foreign troops were landed in Essex or Kent—not only would Ireland refrain from insurrection of any kind, but she would be found raising regiment after regiment for the British army, and the members of these corps would not be drawn solely from the ranks of one political party.

CHAPTER X

THE SEAFARING LIFE

IRELAND does not play nearly so large a part in the maritime annals of the United Kingdom as she does in the military records. Still there is a great deal more to be said on this topic than might at first be thought, and, apart from the romantic and fascinating nature of the subject, there is ample justification for devoting a chapter to the sea life, especially at so important an epoch as that of the Great War.

The first great point of difference between the present and the past is to be found in the much more formidable dangers faced by the older school of seaman. The risks run by sailing-vessels of the type in favour a hundred years ago were tremendous. The long, iron-bound west coast of Ireland was a lee shore whenever, as was often the case, the wind was blowing from the south-west across the Atlantic, and sure destruction waited for any ship caught by a gale too near the land. The east coast was nearly as perilous, for its harbours were far apart and difficult of access, and navigation was much complicated by shoals and currents. The result was that there was a continual sequence of wrecks around the coast of Ireland, most of them accompanied by dreadful loss of life. From Antrim to Cork there

is hardly a bay or headland but could tell its tale of disaster. At Kinsale in 1816 two ships were wrecked together on the Old Head, with a death roll of over two hundred. In the same year the *Seahorse* went ashore at Tramore, and only twenty were saved. In 1811 the frigate *Saldanha* was wrecked in Lough Swilly, and not a soul was saved.[1] In 1807 a cross-Channel packet-boat and a transport, sailing in company from Dublin Bay, lost their bearings in a snow-storm before they were properly clear of the port, and were driven on the rocks near Monkstown, with an attendant loss of over three hundred lives. These are but haphazard examples; the annual total of wrecks around Ireland at this period was enormous, probably not far short of five hundred. It is no mere poetic exaggeration that speaks of every wave around the British coasts as marking the grave of the ship-wrecked dead.

It must be remembered too, as adding to the mariner's difficulties, that the complicated organisation of pilots, lighthouses, buoys, weather forecasts, signals, lifeboats, and so forth, by which he is now aided, did not then exist. There was no Lifeboat Institution then to dot the coast with its stations; in some of the larger ports the Harbour Commissioners or the marine insurance companies maintained a boat or two for this purpose, but the

[1] The people of the neighbourhood went out at daybreak and found one man, completely exhausted, clinging to a rock. He only had strength to say, "It has been a terrible morning," and died in the arms of his rescuers.

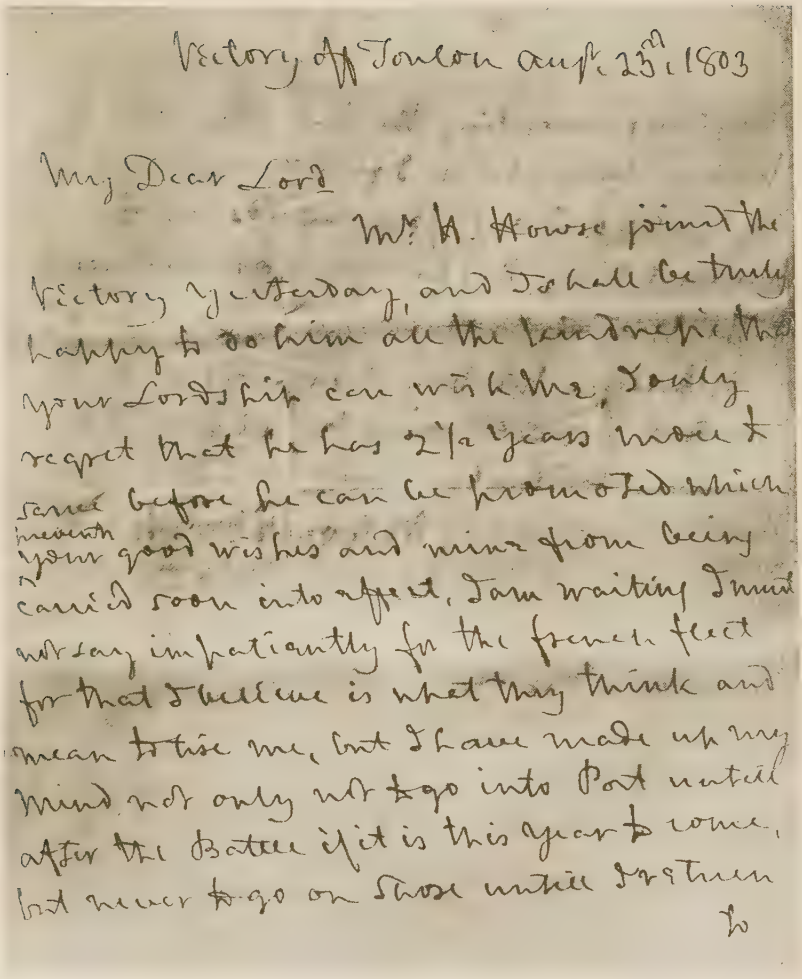
greater part of the country was left to its own resources. When a ship was seen to be in difficulties, shore boats of every kind, Revenue barge, smuggler's punt, fishing coble, waterman's wherry, turned out and did their gallant best with the poor means at their disposal, just as the Quilty fishermen did recently, but their efforts were in most cases foredoomed to failure. The rocket apparatus was not yet in use, and the longshore population, unable to get a line to the doomed ship, had often to see a crew drown within fifty yards of safety.

Lighthouses, again, were non-existent or sadly mismanaged. At many places there was no proper building for the purpose, and the illuminant was coal or even turf, burned in an open brazier. On a gusty night the stoker ran a fair chance of being scorched, and the appearance of the light varied with every atmospheric change. In a gale it was a comet with a flaring tail; in a haze it became a dull red glow proceeding from some point impossible to locate. There was nothing to distinguish one such beacon from another, and a captain approaching the coast, say from America, could only guess vaguely at his position. Towards the end of the eighteenth century better effects began to be produced by using oil lamps, ten or twelve of which were usually kept burning side by side in a glass structure at the top of the lighthouse building. Yet this method had troubles of its own. The lamps required constant attendance, and had a tendency to blacken the glass

and muffle the light; they were often blown out altogether. The keepers in their remote and lonely situations often grew slack and neglected their duties, so that wrathful skippers arriving in harbour reported that lights which should have been discernible several miles off, were "at two miles distance no brighter than a star of the fourth magnitude." Many of the faults of lighthouse management were due to absence of proper control. Eventually the State, by a statute of 1811, handed all the Irish lights over to the Dublin Ballast Office, as being the most important and responsible marine body they could find. The Ballast Office threw itself heartily into its new work, built many new lighthouses and improved the old ones.

But there were other perils to be apprehended beside those of winds and waves. Throughout the greater part of this period Great Britain was at war with other naval powers. The seaborne trade of Ireland, which lies in an exposed position well out into the Atlantic, suffered severely at the hands of French and American privateers. The ships sent out for this purpose were as a rule long, low, black-painted, swift-sailing crafts, carrying as many guns and men as they could provide room for. Their crews were often little better than cut-throats, the sweepings of great seaports attracted to the life by its chance of gain.[1] But the merchantman did not

[1] The privateersmen were sometimes rather poor sailors. There is a story told of a St. Malo privateer, which captured a fishing



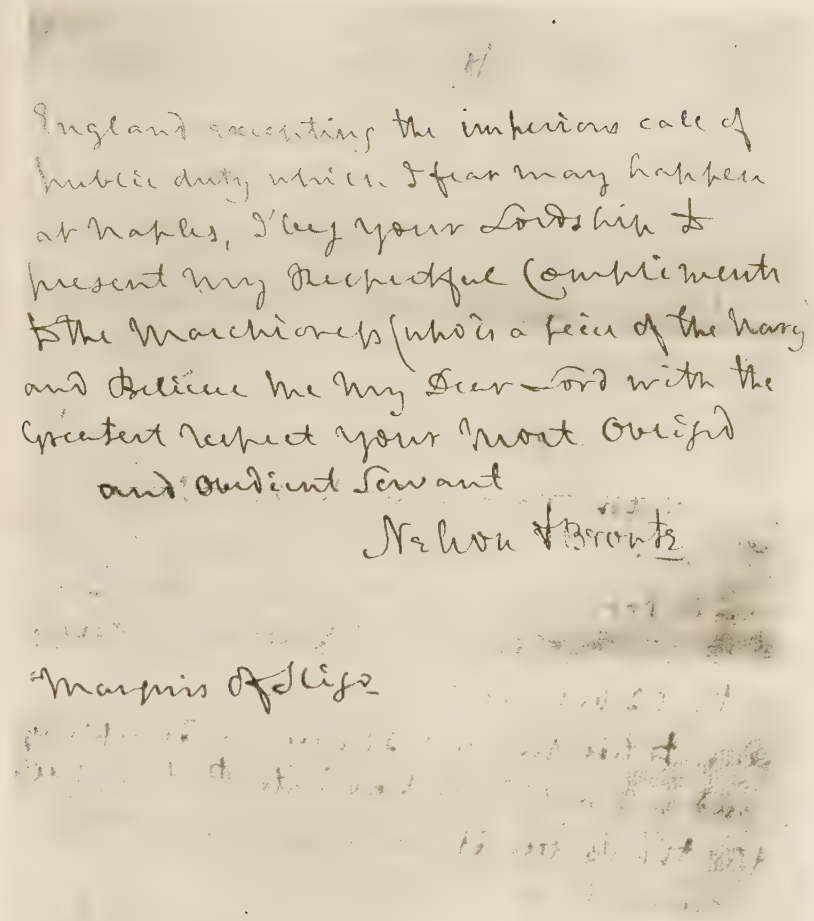
Victory off Toulon Augt. 23rd 1803

My Dear Lord

Mr. H. Howse joined the Victory yesterday, and I shall be truly happy to do him all the kindness that your Lordship can wish me, I only regret that he has 2½ years more to serve before he can be promoted which prevents your good wishes and mine from being carried soon into effect, I am waiting I must not say impatiently for the french fleet for that I believe is what they think and mean to tise me, but I have made up my mind not only not to go into Port untill after the Battle if it is this year to come, but never to go on Shore untill I return to

LETTER OF LORD NELSON TO LORD SLIGO

First part



England excepting the imperious call of public duty which I fear may happen at Naples, I beg your Lordship to present my respectful Compliments to the Marchioness (who is a Peer of the Realm) and believe me my Dear Lord with the greatest respect your most Obliged and obedient Servant

Nelson & Bronte

Marquis of Sligo

LETTER OF LORD NELSON TO LORD SLIGO

Conclusion

always fall an easy prey to these wolves of the sea. Some, scorning even the protection of the convoys which sailed periodically under naval escort along the ocean highways, armed themselves as well as they were able and trusted to the valour and seamanship of their own crews for their defence. They were sometimes astonishingly successful. The merchant sailor could on occasion exhibit the same resourcefulness and confident audacity as characterised the man-of-war's-man of the period. For instance, one incident is recorded in which Irish merchant seamen scored distinctly over the Americans, who were admittedly past-masters in the art of privateering, and indeed of naval warfare generally. The *Caroline*, sailing to Canada from Strangford Lough in 1812, was surprised and captured by the American privateer *Industry* of Lynn, in Massachusetts, and despatched in charge of a prize crew to New York, while the seamen, who had lately navigated her, exchanged the freedom of their own forecastle for chains and confinement in the Yankee's hold. However, it so happened that one of their number had on his person a file, wherewith, when night came, he removed his own fetters and those

boat outside Galway and sent a prize crew on board to navigate its not very valuable prize to France. But a storm came on, and after a day or two the Frenchmen, not knowing where they might be drifting to, entrusted the helm to one of their prisoners, who regained his ship and his liberty by persuading the foreigners that Donegal Bay, into which he proceeded to steer them, was the neutral port of Bergen in Norway. They did not discover the stratagem until too late.

of his comrades. The prisoners then armed themselves with cannon balls, part of the privateer's spare ammunition, which they found lying around, and waited for an opportunity to get on deck. With the morning it came. The American captain, desiring to see his late opponent on some business, gave orders to open the hatches. As soon as a passage was clear the Irishmen poured out of the hold, like the Greeks from the Wooden Horse, hurling their ponderous missiles at every one they encountered. A well-directed round shot brought down the American captain with a broken arm, and after a short, sharp struggle the privateersmen surrendered. Flushed with success, the "Carolines" set sail in pursuit of their own lost vessel, which they overtook next day and recaptured. So the initial disaster was turned to a complete victory.

It might have been expected that the man-of-war or "King's Ship," as it used then to be called, would, as being the great protector of seaborne commerce, have been very popular with the merchant service. However, the direct contrary was the case. Impressment was so continually and so ruthlessly practised, both at sea and on shore, that the merchantman invariably gave the warship a wide berth. In truth it was an odious system. A modern conscription, with its preliminary notice, its formal choice, its limits of age and service, is gentleness itself compared with the ancient practice of "roping in" men and tearing them from their families with

as little compunction as if they were cattle in a stockyard. The pressgangs scoured the streets of Ringsend, the quays of Cork, Waterford, and Belfast, and carried off all whom they encountered, little caring whether they were seamen or not.[1] Clerks and countrymen were often impressed in this way, the officers holding that a few months at sea in one of the blockading fleets would make sailors out of the most unpromising material. In 1812 an emigrant ship lying in the Foyle below Londonderry was boarded by the pressgang and a good half of the intending passengers, together with some of their friends who had come to bid them farewell, were carried away amid the outcries and lamentations of a whole countryside. The officer responsible in this case was reprimanded and the victims released, but there is no doubt that countless brutalities were perpetrated under cover of "His Majesty's urgent need for seamen." The activities of the pressgang caused a sullen resentment to smoulder in the breasts of the merchant seamen. The passage of the captives through the streets would be marked by angry shouts and cries of "Rescue! Rescue!" Sometimes the mob attacked the party and freed the pressed men; sometimes a crowd of infuriated sailors would seek to storm the naval depot, and not be driven off until reinforcements came from the nearest warship or military post.

[1] Legally, of course, only seafaring men were liable to impressment, but officers in charge of pressgangs often allowed themselves a wide latitude, especially when the navy was in urgent need of men.

It seems fairly likely that the practice of impressment had something to do with producing the occasional mutinies and outbreaks of insubordination which mark the naval history of the time. There were other discontented elements in the crews besides the pressed men. More than once there had been wholesale draftings into the navy of persons charged with disturbing the peace in various parts of Ireland. Lord Carhampton had adopted this policy with the "Defenders" of Connaught. Such men were not likely to make loyal sailors—at all events, not until they had been some time in the service. There can be little doubt that Irish sailors had a share in the famous mutinies at the Nore and elsewhere in 1797. Several distinctively Irish names occur in the list of seamen executed on the *Defiance*. And rebel emissaries were frequently detected among the men serving before the mast.

Quarantine was another, though perhaps a more necessary evil. There was always virulent plague in some part of the world, sometimes no farther from home than Hamburg or Gibraltar, and our ancestors went to extraordinary extremes in their anxiety to escape contagion. A ship arriving from a suspected neighbourhood was immediately sent down the coast to some desolate and lonely bay. There her boats were sunk and armed patrols rowed round her night and day to prevent any communication with the shore. A few cables' length away lay the

quarantine sloop, ready to punish any breach of regulations by a broadside fired into the delinquent vessel. Even when the crew were released the cargo was still detained, especially if it consisted of wool, clothes, hair, or any substance thought likely to carry infection. In that case it was all turned out on some island or secluded beach—as, for instance, the North Bull at Dollymount—and there exposed to the purifying influences of wind and sun for a specified period. Until a vessel was discharged from quarantine, not even the pilot was allowed to go on board. He was directed to bring the ship into harbour by shouting orders to her from a row-boat which was to keep at least fifty yards to windward. Considering the intricate navigation of most ports at that time and the difficulty of bringing a ship in even by the ordinary method, it is to be wondered at that a vessel under quarantine ever arrived safely.

But even on reaching the quays, the shipmaster's troubles were not over. At once there descended on him a horde of Customs officials, tidewaiters, landwaiters, collectors, surveyors, and the like. As England and Ireland had before the Union, and for twenty years after it, a different scale of Customs duties, ships coming even from Holyhead or Liverpool had to submit to this ordeal; none but the little coaster was exempt. And this experience was then a thousand times more disagreeable than it is now.

The heaviness of the Customs charges, and the endless formalities which had to be observed by

the honest trader, disgusted many who might otherwise perhaps have preferred the paths of "fair trade," and drove them into alliance with the smuggler. In several counties far more taxable commodities were imported by illicit than by licit means. As is the case even now, though of course on a much larger scale, the smuggler's efforts were chiefly directed to wine, spirits, and tobacco, these being articles of great value in proportion to their bulk, and being charged with a duty heavy enough to be worth the risk of an attempt at evasion. The revenue men patrolled the coast both on land and at sea, but seldom succeeded in catching the smugglers, although their zeal was stimulated by the offer of large rewards in the event of success. Indeed, it was almost better for them not to be too eager, for their opponents stuck at nothing, and were quite ready to beat, maim, or even murder any one who interfered with them. The populace sympathised with and assisted the "free trader"; the very magistrates connived at their proceedings. However, the Customs men, although, as has been said, some of them were corruptible and others too timid and indolent for the work on which they were engaged, displayed as a body a truly admirable persistency and doggedness in the teeth of a most vigorous opposition. Their houses were set on fire; their boats were sunk at their moorings; their horses were stolen; innkeepers who gave them refreshment were boycotted by the whole population;

every possible measure was taken to make the place, in the popular phrase, "too hot to hold them." In Antrim, Down, Donegal, Galway, Clare, Cork, and Kerry the Revenue men hardly dared stir without a strong escort of soldiers at their backs; and even when, under this protection, they seized a few casks of wine or bales of tobacco, they usually had a hard fight before they could bring their prize into safe-keeping. Horns would be blown, a large and angry crowd would gather, and at some favourable place on the road home a rescue would be attempted. It is likely that in the thousand and one broils of this kind, which were perpetually occurring all over the country, almost as much blood was shed as in the "Tithe War." As an example of the organisation of the contraband traders, it may be mentioned that they had regular routes into the interior of the country, along which they conveyed their goods under armed escorts in broad daylight, defying the Customs or Excise to interfere. At sea, too, they were sometimes equally daring. The Mourne coast in 1793 was frequented by a smuggling fleet, so numerous and so heavily armed that the Revenue vessels sent to engage them returned without venturing on a fight. Still most of their business was secret and nocturnal; the wiser among them knew that such displays only drew down the attention of the nearest warship or garrison, and preferred to escape observation if possible, though quite ready to fight when necessary.

There is no doubt that smuggling, like its kindred

practice, illicit distilling, thoroughly demoralised the inhabitants of the districts where it was carried on. Those who began with breaking one law, however harsh or burdensome it might be, grew to have a contempt for the whole code, just and unjust provisions alike.

An evidence of this fact is to be found in the behaviour of the longshore population at a wreck. Nothing could be finer than their conduct while the lives of the crew still hung in the balance, but when once that issue had been decided the whole energies of the district turned in the direction of plunder. Carts came down in hundreds to the water-side and were quickly laden with the cargo. Sometimes the half-drowned captain, if he had survived, aided by some of his crew and perhaps the local Customs establishment, endeavoured to protect his charge, but as a rule to no purpose. It is difficult to know on what principle the people justified their action, which to us seems plain robbery of the owners or underwriters. Perhaps they took the view that the goods, if not appropriated at once, would probably be destroyed by the sea, while the owners would be compensated by the underwriters, and the latter were wealthy enough to bear the dead loss. At all events a good wreck, in winter-time especially, was regarded in many places as a special blessing sent by Providence to help the poor in their time of stress. There is an old rhyme which begins :—

> "The *Eliza* of Liverpool went ashore,
> With wine for the rich and clothes for the poor";

and this distich reflects very fairly the popular feeling on the subject. The sinister stories of false lights and deliberate wrecking associated with some parts of the English coast do not seem to have had a counterpart in Ireland. Indeed, these tales have probably but little foundation, no matter of what country they are narrated. They do not square with the *camaraderie* of the sea, nor with the readiness of sympathy and assistance always shown by the maritime population to sailors in distress. Human life was always respected at a wreck, though the rights of property were set at nought. Besides, the wrecker might very possibly be luring his own kith and kin to destruction. The local fishing-boat might be misled by false lights as well as the rich East Indiaman.

The Irish people of this period were already inured to seeing their friends and relatives depart for America, yet that stream was flowing then from quite a different part of the country to that which it drains now. While now the Catholic south is losing the flower of its inhabitants, then it was the Protestant north that was sending its sons and daughters across the wide Atlantic. The goal was the same then as now, the wide territories of the United States. The Government looked on with a watchful and jealous eye at the loss of so many of its subjects, and, after the manner of the time, tried to cure the evil by means of legislative enactments. One of these forbade the departure of any seaman or artificer—in other words, skilled mechanic—without licence being previously obtained

But in truth, if the inevitable hardships of the voyage did not deter the intending emigrant, it is not likely that he would be daunted by legal difficulties. The ships engaged in the business were ill-found and habitually overloaded. The captains made no provision for feeding or accommodating their passengers. The fare was £8 per head, paid in advance, so that the skipper was certain of his profit no matter what miseries were inflicted on the emigrants. Most of these had neither the experience to know what stores were necessary for the voyage, nor the money to buy them had they known. The passengers were huddled together night and day in the same narrow compass, generally two or three hundred in a vessel not much larger than a modern fishing-smack. The journey might take from three to six months, and often there would be starvation and pestilence on board before the ship was well out of sight of Ireland. Even in calm weather the emigrants' plight was bad enough, but if, to add to their misfortune, the season was stormy, the lower decks of the ship became scenes of abject, long-drawn-out misery, comparable only to the sufferings endured by cattle nowadays. Men and women who had the strength of mind and body to win safely through such an inferno were well fitted to be pioneers in a new country. America owes a great debt to the Ulster immigrants and their descendants. Several of the earlier presidents were of Northern Irish origin.

Nor were the emigrant ships alone in these evil practices. The cross-Channel passenger-boats, especially those running to Liverpool, were notorious for their overcrowding and their bad accommodation. There was such a mass of poor and unskilled labour lacking employment in Ireland that often, when it was rumoured that work might be had in Great Britain, there would be a great rush across the Irish Sea. At such busy seasons avaricious captains were known to take so many passengers that they were compelled to stand upright on deck, packed as closely as herrings, enduring helplessly all the vagaries of wind and weather, and sometimes being washed overboard. Suffocation is known to have occurred on these overcrowded vessels. For sheer want of breathing-space and elbow-room men sometimes got down from the decks into boats towing behind. But this course was hazardous, because the painter might give way or the small boat be swamped without being seen by those on the larger vessel. The trials of such a position are enhanced when it is remembered that the cross-channel journey was not then the short three or four hours' passage that it is now. Even the swiftest-sailing vessels in the most favourable circumstances took the better part of a day, and at stormy seasons the journey might take a week or even longer. In some cases a ship leaving Dublin for Holyhead beat fruitlessly up and down channel until her provisions were exhausted and she had to run back to Ireland to make a fresh start.

Not the least of the sea risks of that day were faced in harbour. Dublin Bay, for instance, was a most treacherous haven. The Liffey was extremely shallow in many places, so that ships of any size could not come up the river further than Poolbeg. The mail-packets berthed at the Pigeonhouse, in the little basin still to be seen there, and landed their passengers on the bare and exposed South Wall, a good three miles from the city. When a gale came on from the south or south-east the position of ships at anchor in Poolbeg was full of danger. Unless their cables could stand the strain, they might be driven helplessly on to the North Bull, a sandbank which has seen the wreck of hundreds upon hundreds of ships. To add to the trouble of those who sailed in and out of the bay, there was a particularly formidable bar at the mouth of the river, where the contending forces of wind, tide, and current produced a choppy, turbulent sea, in which a vessel so unlucky as to run aground would very soon bump herself to pieces.

Finally efforts were made to avoid the dangerous passage of the Liffey altogether. One of the most interesting of the many suggestions made at the time was one for a ship-canal from Sutton through the North Bull, coming out into the river at about Fairview. However, the plan eventually adopted was the construction of a special harbour at Howth, designed for mail-boats and other fast traffic. But Howth Harbour, which, with its two long artificial

breakwaters, had cost a great deal of money, did not realise all that was hoped from it, and so another harbour at Kingstown, or Dunleary, as it was then called, was constructed at an even greater expense. It was at first intended to be an "Asylum Harbour," a refuge to vessels in distress along the shelterless east coast, but its advantages as a mail station were soon perceived, and Howth, after a few years of "glorious life," relapsed into its present state of stagnation. Besides the mail services to Holyhead, there were two other routes in favour, that from Waterford via Dunmore to Milford, and from Belfast to Portpatrick in Scotland via Donaghadee.

The town on the Lagan was in many respects a different city from what it is now. In politics it was democratic. It had lately been a hotbed of rebellion, but through all its popular turmoil it was steadily building up a fabric of commercial prosperity. The town had at the beginning of the nineteenth century a population of about 30,000. No ships were as yet built there, but the linen trade was very prosperous, and in addition there was a very profitable traffic in cattle and provisions. There was already in existence an enterprising and far-seeing Board of Harbour Commissioners, who spent £2000 annually on the improvement of the muddy and tortuous Lagan, and were gradually accumulating a fund of £15,000 for the provision of a dry-dock.

The development of the port of Waterford was hindered by the defects of its harbour, which, though

for the most part a deep and spacious haven, was marred in places by shoals and shallows. These were gradually dealt with. In 1807 one of the worst places, popularly known as the "Ford," was deepened and improved. The trade of Waterford, like that of the other Munster ports, was chiefly in fresh and salt provisions.

Cork alone among the ports of Ireland seems to have had little or no difficulties with its harbour at this period. The city motto of *Statio bene fida carinis* was fulfilled to the letter. It was an easy harbour to enter and, unlike Dublin, a very safe one to anchor in. These advantages secured its choice as the chief naval station for Ireland and the usual port of call for ships sailing across the Atlantic. It was a great victualling port both for the navy and the merchant service. Its trade at this time exceeded that of any other port in Ireland except the capital. Ships waiting convoy put in to Cove to rendezvous; the great East and West India fleets often lay in the harbour for days.

Limerick does not seem to have been particularly prosperous. Its position was rather against it. It lies too far inland, in the technical phrase it is too "deeply embayed," to be convenient for sailing-ships. A westerly wind, which is very prevalent on that coast, would completely close the mouth of the Shannon and make it impossible for any vessel to traverse the fifty-mile channel from the quays of Limerick to the open sea at Loop Head. What

Limerick might well have been, however, and at one time bade fair to become, was the centre of a great system of navigable rivers and canals covering the whole of the midlands and the west. Lying halfway down the Shannon, and with easy access to its expansions and tributaries and to the newly-made Grand and Royal Canals, she might have made herself a great inland mart like, say, Cologne in Germany or St. Louis in America.

Londonderry, too, is not very conspicuous in maritime annals, the reason probably being that her trade was adversely affected by the enormous smuggling operations carried on in the Innishowen peninsula between Loughs Foyle and Swilly. The contraband routes naturally avoided the neighbourhood of a town where they might encounter revenue officials, soldiers, and policemen. So the commerce that would naturally have found its way through Derry came by secret landing-places and along mountain paths into Antrim and Tyrone. The influence of the illicit on the licit trade is shown by the port returns. In years when, through war or for any other reason, the vigilance of the revenue cutters relaxed, the trade of many of the seaports would diminish by half or even more. As it is not to be supposed that the general volume of the trade of the country could suddenly suffer this enormous loss, the natural inference is that a great portion had been transferred from the ordinary legal routes to the devious paths of the smugglers. Similarly, too,

the proximity of the Connemara and County Clare smugglers partly accounted for the decay of Galway.

That ancient port, fallen from its mediæval prosperity, depended chiefly, if not solely, on its fisheries. Curiously enough, too, the very tribe or clan system which was so marked a feature of Galway life was deeply impressed not only on the fisher-folk of that neighbourhood, but also that of Ireland generally. Whether at Howth, Balbriggan, Arklow, Youghal, Kinsale, Skibbereen, or Bantry, the fishermen are always found living in the one district, handing on their trade from father to son, observing their own code of laws, fiercely antagonistic to strangers and aliens. The fleets belonging to rival towns sometimes met and fought pitched battles at sea. But the great bugbear of the fishermen of every town equally was the trawler, now just commencing to be seen in Irish waters. Sometimes an adventurous Devonian came cruising far from home and was severely handled, as, for instance, in 1819, when a trawler from Brixham was surrounded by a number of boats from Howth, its nets destroyed, its rigging cut away, and its crew threatened with terrible maltreatment if they came cruising that way again. A little later, when a Fishery Company had been organised in Dublin to pursue operations by the newer methods, its vessels had to be escorted to and from the fishing-grounds by the Revenue cutters.[1]

[1] The most noted fishing-ground on the Irish coast was the Nymph Bank, not far from Waterford.

The fishing industry, generally, was fostered by the Government as much as possible, chiefly, it appears, because it was an excellent training-school for the navy. But although there were all sorts of money bounties and special privileges, as, for instance, freedom from impressment on condition of contributing a certain quota to the navy annually, the trade in fish did not prosper. Appliances were still very primitive; nets were not much used, and most fishing was done by means of the "long line." The transport arrangements of the day were inadequate to deal with so essentially perishable a commodity. The catch had always to be salted down as soon as it came into harbour, and would often be unmarketable even then. Towns like Kinsale or Howth, which were near large centres of population, succeeded better than most. The harvest of the deep was an even less satisfactory means of livelihood than the harvest of the land.[1]

But perhaps the most gratifying feature of recent times is the improvement in the status and condition of the merchant sailor himself. In the early days of last century the sailor led a miserable and a hazardous life. He was, in the nature of things, often shipwrecked, sometimes in foreign countries thousands of miles from home, and suffered great

[1] It is significant that the Irish fishermen had to leave their own country from time to time in search of employment, just as the West of Ireland harvesters do to this day. The Newfoundland fisheries were largely carried on by ships which sailed thither periodically from Ireland, carrying crews recruited in Waterford and Wexford for the special purpose of fishing along the inhospitable Newfoundland coast.

hardships among aliens while trying to return to his native place. He was badly fed and lodged. Incessant salt meat and weevilly biscuit were his fare, and, of course, the monotony of the diet led to scurvy and similar diseases. The ships in which he sailed were often crank and unseaworthy, sent out by rascally owners in the hope that they might founder in a gale and realise the amount of the insurance. Even on shore he was harassed and victimised. If he escaped the pressgang, he fell into the hands of the crimp and the keeper of the low lodging-house. The State, so solicitous about the course of trade, so prolific of regulations affecting the manufactured products which the ships carried, seems to have taken no thought for the comfort or protection of the mariner himself as distinct from the inanimate bales or barrels of his cargo. Now, however, a more philanthropic spirit has inspired the legislature, and steps have been taken to assist the sailor in difficulties and to protect him from the harpies that make him their prey. Science, too, has come to the sailor's aid in many ways. The food difficulty, for instance, has been solved by such inventions as the process of canning and refrigeration. And the difficulties and dangers of navigation have been much lessened by a series of inventions culminating in the marvellous wireless telegraphy. The sea has been robbed of some of its terrors, and the lot of those who follow it as a profession has been proportionately improved.

CHAPTER XI

INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

The genius of Dickens has familiarised every one with some, at all events, of the chief features of the system of locomotion in vogue in the early nineteenth century. Indeed with many people the old coaching days are indissolubly associated with the figures of Pickwick and Sam Weller. But Dickens' picture is not, and was not intended to be, complete. Being a novelist, he selected for description and emphasis the characteristics which appealed most strongly to himself, and left others to describe the remainder. It will be seen in the course of this chapter that there were other means of locomotion beside the one he was so fond of depicting, and that there were important aspects of even coaching itself which he has not brought out for his readers. For instance, both in England and Ireland the canal-boat was a very serious competitor with the coach for passenger traffic. And even on its own ground, the king's highway, the coach encountered a strange variety of other vehicles, caravans, "fly waggons," diligences, and so on.

At the commencement of the period of this volume

Ireland was far behind Great Britain in her system of internal communications. There were only four mail-coaches running from Dublin to the provinces, viz. to Cork, Belfast, Limerick, and Athlone. Besides these there were ten stage-coaches (*i.e.* coaches not carrying the mails) plying to such towns as Newry, Mullingar, and Enniskillen. But there were important districts quite unaccounted for. Waterford travellers, for instance, were deposited at Kilkenny by the Cork mail, and had to find their own way from thence to their destination. And the cross-country arrangements were very inadequate. For lack of a more suitable conveyance, His Majesty's mails had often to be carried for miles by a bare-legged postboy. Roads were bad and few coaches could attain a higher speed than six miles an hour. Many parts of Ireland were two days' and two nights' journey from the capital, as far away relatively as Madrid or Vienna is nowadays.

Coaching, too, despite the glamour thrown over it by the novelist, was, if considered as a means of locomotion, open to various objections. In addition to being slow, it was uncomfortable, expensive, and dangerous. Its discomforts were very great. The outside passengers were exposed to all the vagaries of a fickle climate. They simply had to sit still and be drenched to the skin or frozen to the very marrow of their bones. No wonder Dickens' characters are so fond of hot punch and other exhilarating drinks. They must often have felt that

they needed "thawing out." The inside passengers were not much better off. Perhaps they did not feel the inclemency of the weather so keenly, but they must have been horribly cramped in their close quarters and half stifled by the stuffiness of the interior. There was not much to choose between the two alternatives. Ladies and old people rode inside, men usually outside. Of course the passengers had a splendid view of the scenery of the country and of the towns they approached, whereas railways usually slink into a place by backyards, sidings, cuttings, and cinder-heaps. But mental enjoyment is considerably lessened by acute bodily discomfort. After a couple of hours the travellers became grumpy, and took no interest in anything save the slowly recurring milestones.

Again, the coach was very dear, as compared with the penny a mile of modern railways. There were no return tickets at low prices, and no excursion fares. Even the slowest coaches charged at least threepence a mile, and every passenger was at a heavy expense to meet the bills for accommodation at the inns where his conveyance put up for the night.

But perhaps the most remarkable feature of old-time travelling was its danger; a coach could come to grief in a thousand and one ways. The roads were very bad, and it was no unusual thing for several vehicles to be hopelessly bogged in some miry spot in the winter-time. The assistance of teams

from the neighbouring farms was often needed to extricate the wayfarers. County Down was so muddy that its inhabitants preferred to mount their carts on runners rather than on wheels. It was easier to slide over the mud than roll through it. Sometimes a swollen river would flood a district. The coaches used to splash gallantly through the inundation. On such an occasion one of them left *terra firma* altogether and floated away like a great Noah's ark, amid the shrieks of alarmed passengers on top and half-drowned passengers within. Heavy snow was another difficulty. The horses had hard work to get through it, and the lumbering, heavily laden conveyance behind oscillated and swayed so with their efforts that it needed but little to topple it over altogether, landing every one in a ten-foot snowdrift. Beside these troubles there were in later times others arising from the jealousies and rivalries of competing coach proprietors. Races took place on the high roads, and often resulted in collisions and catastrophes. A snapped pole or a broken trace might bring swift disaster.

Then there were the highwaymen. Wherever the road crossed a lonely, unfrequented place, these dare-devils of crime abounded. The Curragh of Kildare, Maryborough Heath, the passes of the Galtees, Killiney Hill, the Mourne country near Newry, were their chief haunts. There was even one dangerous spot between Dublin and Swords. The peasantry admired them, and still relate their exploits.

PASSENGER CANAL BOAT AT HARCOURT LOCK, GRAND CANAL

There are even ballads about them. Fermoy was celebrated for one "Brennan on the Moor." They were sometimes desperate men, on whose head the Government had set a price because of some political offence, and who chose this means of avenging themselves. As highwaymen they could harry the State by intercepting its mails and by robbing the rich men, who formed its chief support. Even the protection of two armed guards could not secure the night coaches against their subtly planned attacks.

As the century wears on, however, a distinct improvement begins to be perceptible in the means of communication. There are signs that the coach proprietors are beginning to feel a sharp competition from the canal companies. Although the inevitable delay at each lock made it impossible for the canal-boats to cover the distance from one town to another in as short a time as a good coach, nevertheless the safety, cheapness, and comfort of this mode of conveyance made it attractive to many. The fares only averaged twopence a mile, instead of the threepence of the coaches. The boats were roomy and glided smoothly over the placid waters, with none of the distressing jolts incidental to land carriage. There were first and second class cabins, and meals were served on board, so that altogether, although tedious, it was not an unpleasant way of travelling. The canal companies, if they had not been superseded by the railways, would probably have de-

veloped along the same lines, both as regards goods and passenger traffic. Even as it was, they were building hotels at various points, and organising short car or coach services to connect towns not actually on the canal with their daily boat service to and from Dublin. And besides their main trunk lines from Dublin to the Shannon, they would also have constructed in process of time branch canals to all the more important centres. They had actually made some progress in this direction, and would probably have made more had they not been entangled in financial embarrassments. Waterford and Limerick were put into communication with the Grand Canal by means of the Barrow and Shannon navigations. Belfast could easily have been linked up with the Royal Canal by way of the Lagan and Lough Neagh, and, by utilising the course of the river Suir, it might have been possible to connect Cork with Waterford. Schemes of this kind were suggested from time to time : some were never tried ; others were put into execution too late, so that their inauguration coincided too closely with the coming of the railways, and the young undertakings perished sooner or later through their inability to contend against the new form of competition.

However, even apart from the canal companies and their boats and coaches, there seems to have been a very marked increase between 1800 and 1829 in the amount of wheeled traffic on the Irish roads. The directory of the latter year shows no less than

twenty-eight mail-coaches, not to mention a number of passenger "caravans." Every provincial town of any note has a daily mail-coach from the capital, and the more important cities, such as Cork and Belfast, receive two mails daily, one being despatched in the morning and the other in the evening. There begins to be an adequate system of cross-country and subsidiary coaches, along such routes as that from Londonderry to Sligo and from Cork to Tralee.[1] The mails from Great Britain enter Ireland at three points—Donaghadee for the northern district, Howth for the central, and Dunmore near Waterford for the southern, the British ports of despatch being Portpatrick in Scotland, Holyhead, and New Milford. The rate of travelling is increased to about eight or nine miles an hour, showing that the roads must have been very much improved. Even the "caravans," which were large and roomy vehicles, rather of the type of the waggon than of the coach, could travel at the rate of six miles per hour. They seem to have been intended for the poorer class of passenger, and did not go more than seventy or eighty miles in a day's journey.

[1] Bianconi's "long cars," which were an enlarged and improved form of the side-car, eventually established themselves as the regular means of cross-country passenger traffic. They were started in 1815, but were not at first successful. Bianconi, who died a wealthy man, was originally an Italian pedlar. In his journeys through the country he had often felt the need of better communication between the various small towns, and had determined, if he could ever command capital, to lay it out on a cross-country coach or car service.

A good deal of credit for the improvement of the Irish system of locomotion must be ascribed to the Post Office. Many of the coach routes owed their first adoption and their continued existence to the subsidies received for carrying the mails. Running a coach was an extremely expensive business[1] and men were apt to be cautious about hazarding their money in what might prove a very unremunerative speculation ; yet the Post Office was continually being besought, especially by the mercantile communities of the various country towns, to increase the existing postal facilities and to include in their scope districts which had hitherto been left out. It could only do so by negotiating with some person for the establishment of a new line of coaches, promising him in return the exclusive right of carrying the mails at a price to be agreed on. The mail subsidy would have to be proportionate to the likelihood of a loss being sustained on the ordinary passenger traffic.

In this connection may be mentioned the system of Government "expresses." These were maintained along various roads, especially during periods of war or rebellion, in order to convey official despatches as quickly as possible to and from Dublin. At certain intervals along the chosen route well-mounted men were posted, whose duty it was to devote their whole attention to transmitting Government messages

[1] Wakefield estimates that the running of a coach cost on an average 1s. 8d. per mile. Thus, for instance, one coach daily each way between Dublin and Galway would cost the proprietor between £7000 and £8000 a year.

in either direction as soon as they were received, each man galloping at his highest speed until he reached the next station and handed over his despatch to be forwarded on. The "expresses" were very costly, especially when, as was the case between England and Ireland, they involved the retention not only of special messengers but also of special vessels.[1] And even along the Irish roads they seem to have caused a very great expense.

As regards the transportation of goods, the evidence goes to show that the roads of Ireland were not much used for the purpose, water carriage, whether by sea or canal, being so much cheaper, and for heavy loads, at all events, quite as speedy as conveyance by road. Cartage at twopence or threepence a mile was too heavy a burden to be incurred, especially since most parts of Ireland were within easy reach of the sea, and even the midlands were intersected by a navigable river, the Shannon, and two great canal systems. The produce appears to have been carted from its place of origin only as far as the nearest seaport or canal bank, and this was rarely more than one or two days' journey. There was nothing in Ireland analogous to the ponderous four-horse goods and parcels waggons which were to be found pacing their way slowly along such roads as that from London to Liverpool.

[1] Strange to say, the lottery proprietors adopted a similar plan to obtain news of the drawing of tickets in London.

CHAPTER XII

PUBLIC HEALTH, SANITATION, AND MUNICIPAL IMPROVEMENT

The native Irish Parliament, active as it was in many directions, does not seem to have turned much of its attention to the care of public health. It is true that there was an exaggerated fear of seaborne pestilence, and the life of the sailor who hailed from a suspected port was, for some time after his arrival in home waters, made a burden to him by minute and meticulous quarantine regulations. But in this case, as in so many others, "a man's foes are those of his own household." Typhus fever, the result of overcrowding, bad sanitation and lack of proper food, was ever present among the Irish poor, and intermittently became epidemic and carried off great numbers. Smallpox, too, was prevalent to an extent almost inconceivable in these days of vaccination.[1]

In 1804, however, a "Cowpock Institution" was established in Dublin in order to extend the advantages of this preventive to the masses in Ireland, and gradually that much-dreaded disease, which dis-

[1] In 1730 the bills of mortality record 444 deaths in Dublin alone from this cause. See Mr. H. Wood's paper (Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland, session 1908–1909).

figured where it did not kill, was driven out of the country. The method adopted was the gratuitous inoculation of the poor, who presented themselves at the institution, and the free distribution of "packets of infection" (vaccine apparently) to all who applied for them from the country. However, whether from ignorance of what the State might achieve in grappling with disease, or from carelessness and excessive preoccupation with purely political matters, the statesmen of the period before the Union hardly concerned themselves with the health of the people. Not until the year 1765, when the Grand Juries were empowered to build and support "County Infirmaries," was any provision made for affording hospital accommodation in country districts. Even then the institutions were inadequate to the duties assigned them. The annual endowment was at first only £200 a year in each case, half paid by Government and half drawn from Grand Jury funds, and it appears that very few of the counties could support more than thirty or forty beds.[1] Hospitals with such limited resources were useless in face of a great epidemic, and it is a significant fact that they seem to have taken very little part in coping with the great outburst of typhus in 1817.

As with education, the State seems to have left the care of the public health to the voluntary exer-

[1] Some of the smaller and poorer counties could only make provision for eighteen patients. See Public Accounts for various infirmaries, 1808.

tions of charitable individuals. In the larger towns there were usually to be found hospitals established by private munificence, as, for instance, Steevens' and Mercer's in Dublin, or perhaps depending for their support on some ancient endowment, like the Leper Hospital at Waterford.[1] In some of the rural neighbourhoods dispensaries, at which the poor were provided with advice and medicine free, were maintained by the subscriptions of the local gentry.

It will be seen how ill prepared the country was for the serious trial it was soon to pass through. In 1816 there was sharp distress, caused by a bad harvest, and aggravated by the congestion of the labour market by numbers of soldiers and sailors disbanded after the conclusion of peace with France. The poor underwent very great privations during the winter. The following summer was so wet that the peat, the usual fuel of rural Ireland, could not be dried so as to be fit for burning. Great numbers of the people, already debilitated by lack of proper nourishment, caught chills as a result of the continual wettings they endured while searching for sticks to make a fire. The final result was a terrible epidemic of typhus fever, which lasted two years and carried off thousands of victims. It is said to have first appeared in Ulster, but itinerant beggars and men tramping in search of work soon carried

[1] Supposed to have been founded by King John for the benefit of lepers. In later times it was used as a general hospital, but its accommodation was very limited.

it all over the kingdom. The larger towns were afflicted to an especial degree, because their organised and endowed charities had acted like a magnet to attract the starving and disease-stricken poor. The slums of Dublin and Cork, for instance, were soon hotbeds of contagion.

Robert Peel, who was Chief Secretary, showed all his accustomed intelligence and energy in dealing with the situation. The overtaxed hospitals of Dublin were assisted with grants; prisons and barracks were turned into infirmaries. At the same time it was announced that Government would lend financial aid towards the establishment of fever hospitals in country districts, provided that the existence of fever was proved and that a fair amount of private subscription was forthcoming. By an Act of 1818[1] power was given to set up local Boards of Health, armed with authority to send persons affected with typhus to hospital and to cleanse and disinfect their houses and clothing. Once this statute was properly put in operation, the epidemic, so far as the rural districts were concerned, seems to have been checked, though of course not suppressed. At all events there was a regular place for the reception of the fever-stricken and they were sure of some attention and care, whereas before this time a whole family had often died off, children and parents, one after the other, absolutely untended by their neighbours. There had been

[1] 58 Geo. III., c. 47.

painful cases, too, where persons who had been only lodgers at the time when they became ill were driven out by the householder, to stagger delirious and half naked from door to door, creeping at last, with the instinct of the sick animal, to some refuge among rocks or ruins where they might die unmolested. In some parishes there seems to have been a custom, almost as cruel in its effects, of putting the sufferer, together with a hired nurse, into a barn and blocking up the door to prevent egress.[1] Such scandals as these ceased to occur when the Boards of Health got to work. One of their first steps was to take a house and fit it up for the time being as a fever hospital, and although the cases might at first be very numerous, the disease seems to have yielded to proper treatment and the mortality was not very great.[2]

In the cities, however, the problem was much more complicated. It was very difficult to eradicate the disease from the noisome and overcrowded slums, which were unfortunately to be found in every town. Infection lurked in the floor, the walls, clothing, bedding and utensils. Before a patient could be taken to hospital, he had in all probability communicated the disease to a dozen

[1] The clergyman and the doctor had apparently to come through the thatch of the roof to pay their calls. Letter of R. Dillon, Ballyquin, Jan. 3, 1819.

[2] At Rathdrum, for instance, between August 1818 and August 1820, though there were 901 admissions, only twenty-eight deaths were recorded.

others. The epidemic in one sense was a blessing in disguise, for it seems to have impressed on the medical authorities of Dublin the advantages of cleanliness and disinfection. The House of Industry sent out inspectors through the streets of the city to report on the proper course for the removal of nuisances. Gangs of paupers from the same institution were employed lime-washing the walls of houses where fever had occurred. Clothes and bedding were taken away to be disinfected, the usual method being to steep them first in cold water and then in a strong solution of soda. One of the minor difficulties encountered was that the garments of the poor could rarely endure this ordeal, and the hospital had either to clothe its patients or discharge them half naked. The chief hospitals of the city turned their attention to the sanitation of the districts around them, Cork Street Fever Hospital, for instance, occupying itself with the old quarter called the "Liberties," and Sir Patrick Dun's taking charge of the south-eastern district near the Liffey.

But these precautions seem to have come too late to be of any real service. The fever had strongly established itself in the city long before the inspectors arrived with their pails and whitewash-brushes. The conditions of life in the poorer streets were such as to foster contagious disease. A medical report of 1817 reveals the appalling fact that seventy-one houses in Church Street contained, in their 393

separate apartments, no less than 1997 human beings, of whom 628 were adults unemployed.[1] This was an average of five persons to a room and nearly twenty-eight to a house. In Nicholson's Court, off the same street, amongst a population of 151 souls, only two bedsteads and two blankets were to be found. The poor man's bed was usually loose straw, and his sole coverlet was the tattered rags of his wardrobe. A straw bed could not be disinfected ; it could only be burned, and when it was gone there rose the problem what was to be put instead of it. If fresh straw was issued it soon became as filthy and as full of contagion as the former had been. It is not surprising that these overcrowded districts furnished the majority of the cases. Even in December 1817, at the very outset of the epidemic, there had already been 123 from Church Street and 111 from Barrack Street.[2]

But before the year was out the whole city was involved in calamity. The House of Industry Hospital, though it was allowed to use the newly built Richmond Penitentiary as an auxiliary, was soon overtaxed. The same was true of Cork Street, the only hospital in Dublin primarily intended for fever patients. Sir Patrick Dun's, Steevens' and some of the other hospitals came to the rescue. Between September 1817 and June 1819 the records

[1] Letter of Medical Inspectors House of Industry, Dec. 16, 1817.

[2] This thoroughfare was near the Royal Barracks. It is now known as Benburb Street.

show 40,594 admissions of fever cases to the Dublin hospitals, and 1919 deaths. One individual in every four of the city population must have been struck down, and about one in every eighty perished.[1] The same is true of the other towns. In Cork the one fever hospital on Patrick's Hill had to be supplemented by an auxiliary in a house in Peacock Lane,[2] which had been put at the disposal of the authorities by the Roman Catholic clergy. Here in some cases it had not been possible to provide the sick with bedsteads. Considering the smaller population, the return of cases and deaths is quite as bad as that for Dublin. In one period of twelve months, from September 1, 1817, to August 31, 1818, there were 9997 admissions and 284 deaths.[3]

In the summer of 1819 the epidemic began to abate, more, it appears, because it had run its course than from any human efforts to arrest its progress. Fortunately the toll of lives it exacted was not very great in proportion to the number of persons affected. Even in the worst managed hospitals the mortality was only one in ten, while under better conditions it was reduced to one in forty. The doctors seem to have treated it by administering purgatives or emetics in the early stages, and adopting various measures calculated to keep down the temperature and prevent delirium.

[1] Returns furnished in 1819.
[2] Probably the present Peacock Lane convent.
[3] Hospital Reports, 1818.

Occasionally, but not as a regular practice, they had recourse to bleeding and blistering.

But really the problem of typhus was as much social as medical in its nature. Poor food, overcrowding, bad clothing and housing were at the root of its prevalence. When provisions again became plentiful and cheap, and prospects of employment opened up, the disease lost its virulence. Before that time the hospitals found that even their " cured " patients returned to them with relapses. Back again half starving in the same evil conditions of life as before, they could not gain sufficient strength to rout the enemy completely. So, although it involved a good deal of expense, it was found better in the end for the hospitals to provide at least one nourishing meal a day for those who had lately been discharged as convalescent. For the same reason, too, in some cases clean clothes and bedding were issued.

By this means the patient was tided over the dangerous period of convalescence and regained sufficient strength to resist any further onset of the disease. But the doctors of the period themselves admit that though disinfection and sanitation had done much to stay the epidemic, and though medical treatment and careful nursing were not ineffective, it was really the approach of more prosperous times that emptied the fever hospitals and restored the vitality of the people.

During the first three decades of the nineteenth century there seems to have been a very considerable activity in the medical world and a general awaken-

ing of the public conscience in matters relating to health. For example, steps were taken to put an end to the scandalous maltreatment of lunatics. In the year 1800 there was only one establishment in Ireland where these unhappy creatures received anything like proper care and attendance. This was Swift's Hospital in Dublin, founded in 1757 under the will of the great Dean of St. Patrick's, whose whole life had been clouded and embittered by fear of madness, and who eventually died insane. But naturally a single institution could not deal with the insanity of a whole country, and lunatics as a class were accordingly left to the tender mercies of local authorities. In the few towns which possessed a "House of Industry," some cells might be set aside for their reception, but, so far as can be seen, not one lunatic in twenty was provided for in this way. No special treatment was arranged for inmates of this class, and they were only too often subjected to ridicule or practical jokes by the sane paupers. Those persons whose form of derangement rendered them absolutely dangerous to the public were often shut up for safe-keeping in gaols, where their presence contributed another element of horror to an already sufficiently miserable scene. The confinement, lack of occupation, and unhealthy surroundings aggravated their malady and rendered it incurable, while the lunatics themselves suffered much brutality at the hand of keepers and convicts.[1]

[1] The sane and insane were sometimes confined in the same cell.

Furthermore, their presence precluded any attempt to enforce prison discipline. It was useless to expect silence in a gaol when perhaps three or four maniacs were shrieking at the top of their voices. Every kind of harmless lunatic, the imbecile, the idiot, the victim of delusions, or the epileptic, was as a rule left to the care of his relatives or of charitable people, and if these failed he might roam the roads, begging by day and sheltering wherever he could by night, very much in the style of the fool in "King Lear."

In 1815, however, more than half a century after the founding of Swift's Hospital, its efforts, so long unseconded, began to be supplemented by those of a new establishment under State patronage, the Richmond Asylum in Dublin. The latter was at first intended for curable cases only, and it was thought that it might afford sufficient accommodation for the needs of the whole country.[1] But this hope was soon falsified, and two years later Commissioners were appointed to supervise the erection of asylums to serve the country districts. At Armagh, Belfast, Limerick, and elsewhere these institutions sprang up, each serving from three to five counties. With the wider opportunities thus afforded for studying mental disease, medical men seem soon to have realised the advantages to be derived from a more humane

[1] A letter of 1812 recommends that the establishment of country asylums should be discouraged until the effect of the proposed institution in Dublin is seen. Letter of C. W. Flint, April 21, 1812.

treatment of the mentally afflicted. Chains and fetters, strait-waistcoats and other forms of mechanical restraint, once much misused by impatient or callous keepers, were in course of time only permitted as an exceptional measure. Gradually the lunatic came to be treated as a human being suffering under a terrible infliction should be, not as a noxious and dangerous wild beast. In their early days, however, even the district asylums seem to have been regarded more as a safe place of detention than as curative hospitals for the insane.

It is interesting, too, to note the improvements in the supply of water to the cities, especially to the capital. For more than five centuries the citizens of Dublin had relied on a supply taken from the Dodder above Templeogue and conveyed to the city in an artificial channel some three or four miles in length.[1] But the Dodder, being a mountain torrent, was subject to drought in summer and flood in winter, either of which events caused great trouble to the Corporation. Accordingly, in 1776, when the Grand Canal was under construction, an arrangement was made by which the new company disposed of its surplus water to the city. The canal ran close to the old "basin" or reservoir in James's Street, and the directors, drawing, as they could, on immense stores of water in the interior of Ireland, found no

[1] This, the "old city watercourse," was constructed in 1244. It still contains a good flow of water, and helps to turn a number of mills in the Harold's Cross district.

difficulty in setting aside a quantity sufficient to meet the needs of the metropolis. About the year 1806 a similar contract was made with the Royal Canal company as regards the northern half of the city, most of which is in too elevated a situation to be supplied from the City Basin. A new reservoir for this district was built at the top of Blessington Street, where it is still to be seen.

But though there was thus an excellent provision of water, the arrangements for its distribution do not seem to have been so satisfactory. The system of piping does not seem to have been extended to more than the chief streets. Only the better class of house was connected with the city supply at all. The poorer people had to take their water from public fountains placed here and there along the leading thoroughfares, and were naturally prone to economise in the use of water, when every drop for drinking or washing had to be laboriously carried from a distance.[1] This was especially the case in outlying districts, which, from their situation, were not so well provided even with the fountains as was the centre. The great prevalence of fever in the "Liberties" was ascribed to the dirty habits of the people, which arose as much from the lack of water as from indolence or poverty. However, considerable improvements were effected in this respect by

[1] Those who have lived in waterless districts of Africa or Australia will recollect, perhaps, to what unpleasant expedients they have sometimes been driven by the same cause.

the Pipe Water Committee of the Dublin Corporation, under judicious stimulation by the Irish Government. After 1809 the wooden mains which had so long been in use in Dublin began to be replaced by metal pipes, which were more durable and less likely to contaminate the water. Fountains were established throughout the "Liberties," and provision was made to carry the water supply into every street.

As regards municipal sanitation, too, a distinct improvement is discernible. Even before the epidemic of typhus, and of course in a much greater degree after it, many of the citizens showed great eagerness to have a proper system of drainage installed in their streets. As early as 1812 the annual report of the Paving Board, the department established by law to take charge of the paving, lighting, and cleansing of Dublin, mentions the receipt of a great number of applications for the extension of main sewers to various districts. It must be remembered, too, as showing the new zeal for sanitation, that these applicants, under the existing law, were taking on themselves a heavy pecuniary obligation, since the Paving Board was empowered to levy contributions for the cost of such works from the inhabitants of the streets affected. There is evidence, indeed, that the Board, harassed as it was by financial troubles, found it difficult to keep pace with the requirements of the citizens.

However, it appears that, as a rule, from fifteen hundred to two thousand yards of new sewers were

constructed annually during the period 1810–1820, and subsequently the average rose to almost double that amount.

The periodical renewal of the pavement of the city gave opportunities for much-needed sanitary reform, one of the most remarkable being the abolition of the open gutter[1] in the middle of the street, and its replacement by the modern system of side channels communicating with the underground sewers by means of gratings set at short intervals. At the same time the cobble stones and gravel, which had from time immemorial been used to form the road surface, were no longer laid down in important streets, and in their stead the Paving Board adopted the new process invented by and named after Macadam. Flags were used to form the footways, and granite from Dalkey was tried as a paving material, apparently with very good results. A sharp watch was kept on the proprietors of slaughter-houses and dairies, who were the chief offenders against cleanliness and creators of public nuisances. The system of scavenging became more efficient, and the importance of removing refuse well away from the city was recognised.[2] In some poor

[1] In some of the older by-streets this gutter may still be traced, as, for instance, in Chapter Place, near St. Patrick's Cathedral. See illustration on p. 259 of the writer's *Story of Dublin*.

[2] The Paving Board's action in this respect was largely due to the rising force of public opinion on the subject. For instance, in 1818 St. Mark's Parish petitioned, in vigorous language, against the maintenance of a great refuse heap near Boyne Street. The Board returned a rather off-hand reply, saying that the noxious

neighbourhoods, for lack of proper sanitary conveniences in the tenement houses, filth of every kind had been allowed to accumulate in the side streets and lanes or on plots of waste ground. The Paving Commissioners frequently refer to the clearing out of Augean Stables of this description. Often they mention that a sewer became necessary in order to drain off the foul semi-liquid deposit which they encountered in the cellars and around the foundations of old houses. At the same time landlords were compelled, wherever possible, to provide the form of accommodation which was then called a "necessary," but had apparently not been considered in that light by owners or architects.

In the third section of their duties, the lighting of the city, the Paving Commissioners seem to have run counter to public opinion. At first they had only to deal with oil lamps, and managed fairly well either by supervising the lighting in their own persons or by letting it out to contractors. The illumination, however, was not brilliant, for the lamps, which, in those days of unrefined oil, were probably not much brighter than two or three candles burning side by side, were set at intervals of

nature of this heap was much exaggerated, and that their own employees did not find their health impaired by contact with it. The parishioners replied in a strain not unworthy of Dean Swift. "Does the Board mean to affirm," they inquired, "that by familiarising the inhabitants of St. Mark's to mephitic effluvia, they will render them so insensible to the nuisance and its danger as that their constitutions will acquire the hardihood and insusceptibility enjoyed by the despoilers of privies?"

sixteen yards. The town was so dimly lit that little or no shopping was done after dusk, and thieves and night-prowlers of every description could prosecute their designs without fear of detection or arrest.

About the year 1815 the adoption of coal-gas for public lighting was first mooted. From the first the Paving Board, which possessed in full measure that liking for expensive enterprises so characteristic of State and municipal departments, was anxious to be entrusted with the task of installing a new system of public lighting. Accordingly it proceeded to introduce a Bill in Parliament permitting itself to draw heavily on public funds for the purpose of establishing a system of gas lighting throughout the city of Dublin.

Such an attempt was not likely to succeed. The Board was not popular with the ratepayers and electors. It collected by its own officials the taxes assigned for its support, and had naturally earned considerable odium and gained a reputation for harshness and severity. Furthermore, its administration had been shown on several occasions to be neither efficient nor economical, and several scandals had been revealed. There had been wholesale suspensions of Commissioners more than once. In consequence, therefore, of the loudly expressed opposition of the Dublin people, Parliament withheld its sanction from the measure.

In the meantime private enterprise had brought about the manufacture of gas in Dublin, though on

quite a small scale. A Mr. Neptune Blood, a resident in Westmoreland Street, set up a gas-works there in order to furnish light to his own business premises. His neighbours gladly availed themselves of his supply, and soon several shops in the immediate neighbourhood were lit by gas. So far Blood had managed without taking his pipes across a street, an operation which would have necessitated the breaking up of the pavement and would have brought him at once into collision with the Paving Board. At last the prospect of an advantageous contract with the Theatre Royal led him—or, rather, the company into which his undertaking had by this time developed—to overstep the narrow limits of Westmoreland Street and its vicinity. But the Paving Board refused to permit the opening of the road, alleging the confusion that would arise if there were several small gas companies in Dublin, each making perpetual applications of this kind. They asserted also, and indeed with some truth, that the whole question, especially as no arrangements had yet been made for the public lighting, was far too important and complicated to be dealt with piecemeal. Still it seemed to be a case of "dog in the manger," and, at the suit of Frederick Jones, the then manager of the Theatre Royal, the Lord Lieutenant interposed his authority and directed the Paving Board to grant the necessary permission.[1]

Eventually, at least two private companies got a

[1] Letter of Nov. 4, 1818.

foothold in Dublin.[1] The city was first lit with gas in 1825.

For a long time the price of the new light was very high, at the beginning as much as 15s. per thousand cubic feet, but gradually it came down to 7s. 6d. The company which at present supplies the city was not incorporated until 1845. It overcame all its rivals, and now has practically a monopoly, save in so far as it is affected by the advances of electricity.

While a better system of street lighting must have had its effect on the morals of the city, good work was also done for the improvement of Dublin generally and the amelioration of its slums by the Wide Streets Commissioners. This remarkable board had not, so far as the writer is aware, a counterpart outside Ireland. It had been founded by the Irish Parliament in 1757 for a temporary purpose, viz. the construction of a convenient thoroughfare from the Castle to Essex Bridge. This street was accordingly built and named after the Parliament, to which it owed its origin. After its completion the Commissioners remained in office, busying themselves, now with such large designs as the great Sackville Street to College Green line of streets, which is the backbone of modern Dublin, now with such minor matters as the laying out of new quays

[1] One was for the production of gas from oil instead of coal. It seems to have been merged subsequently in one of its coal competitors. These early companies must have been weaklings financially. They were for ever amalgamating or buying each other up.

or the widening of narrow lanes. They were empowered to buy up houses and lands at a price to be assessed by a jury of citizens specially convened for that purpose. To their efforts, which were inspired throughout by a truly commendable largeness of outlook, is due the transformation of Dublin from a congeries of mean streets to a well-planned and handsome city. The antiquarian may grieve at the demolition of much picturesque old architecture in the execution of these projects, but the social reformer, who knows how vice, misery, and disease lurk in such old districts, cannot but rejoice at the change. The mere admission of sunlight and fresh air into these rookeries was undoubtedly the means of saving hundreds of lives that would otherwise have been sacrificed to typhus fever or some other epidemic.

In this as in other respects the provincial towns seem to have followed the lead of the capital. Visitors to Ireland often remark on the existence, in the same town, of spacious streets and inconvenient, ill-paved laneways. The explanation is that the lanes are the original ancient streets, while the broader thoroughfares were constructed as municipal improvements towards the end of the eighteenth or the beginning of the nineteenth century.

It must be confessed, on the whole, that the march of progress in most Irish towns was not accelerated by the existing civic authorities, who were as a rule too much concerned with political and religious animosities to pay proper attention to their duties.

It is significant that the paving and lighting of Dublin, for instance, which had once been under the control of the Corporation, had, by Acts of the Irish Parliament, been transferred to a Government department. Nominally the city was governed by representatives of twenty-five trading guilds, but as a matter of fact very few of the members of these bodies had any connection with the trades they were supposed to profess. The guilds were really political clubs of a narrow, intolerant type, and as the only qualification recognised for admission was connection (by birth, marriage, or apprenticeship) with an existing member, it was practically impossible for any one opposed to the party in power to enter the guild, much less to obtain a seat on the Corporation. Roman Catholics were uniformly denied representation, and even the soundest of Protestants were driven out if they ventured to raise their voices in favour of Emancipation.

The provincial towns were perhaps in a worse state than the capital. There was the same narrow limitation of the franchise as in Dublin, but there was an even greater mismanagement and disregard of public opinion, due probably to the fact that in the country the members of the municipal bodies had a life tenure of their posts, while in Dublin they were only elected for a period. The result was that the local administration fell into the hands of cliques and cabals, or was controlled by local magnates. At Cork the Corporation merely met to endorse the

decisions of a certain "Friendly Club." At Londonderry, an Orange convivial society, the "Glass and Bottle Club," played a similar part. Belfast was absolutely under the control of the Marquis of Donegall, head of the Chichester family. As "Lord of the Castle" his consent had to be obtained before even a by-law could be enacted. He nominated the chief judicial and executive official of the borough, the curiously named "sovereign" of Belfast, who was clothed with powers not unlike those of a mayor or portreeve. At Waterford, after violent and long-continued contentions between two factions, an agreement was come to by which the leaders on either side undertook to divide the city offices in a certain proportion for the future. Such arrangements as these were promoted by the veil of secrecy which hung over corporation proceedings everywhere. Accounts of the municipal finances were seldom submitted to the public, and never underwent a regular audit by impartial and competent persons.

The general mass of the inhabitants exhibited towards their supposed representatives a contemptuous indifference, which only rose into active hostility when there had been some more than usually flagrant municipal scandal. Such outbursts of popular wrath were not ineffectual in bringing the corporators to a sense of their duty, but the improvement was never lasting. The old habits returned; jobbery, corruption, and intrigue once more asserted their influence, marring and thwarting

every project for the betterment of social conditions.

Accordingly the Irish cities at this period were a true reflex of the bodies by which they were governed. In one department of municipal activity a good standard might be attained, but in other quarters the most shocking negligence would be found to prevail. In Cork and Waterford there were Wide Streets Commissioners at work,[1] but in the former city water was dear and there was but one public fountain for the poor, while in the latter the peace of the town was entrusted to the feeble guardianship of a police force which contained only fourteen men.[2] Belfast had a good and cheap water supply,[3] but a charge of malversation of funds contributed for charitable purposes had been brought home to several of the corporators. The streets of Galway were unlighted. Limerick neglected its roads and bridges and disposed of the scavenging problem by selling the right to collect the city refuse to the highest bidder. The inevitable result of this practice was that the back lanes which most needed cleaning, but were awkwardly situated for the

[1] The excellent quay system of both towns was at this time still in process of construction.

[2] The explanation given was that the sum allowed for "lighting and watching" had been devoted almost exclusively to the former purpose, and there were no funds left to pay an efficient police.

[3] The water rate was from 6d. to 1s. in the £, according to the valuation of the house. The supply, however, was not solely in municipal hands. The Charitable Society took a large share in its working.

contractor's purpose, were neglected and became hotbeds of typhus and other contagious fevers. Londonderry had distinguished itself by building at great cost a reservoir for its new water supply, only to discover when too late that the city stood higher than the reservoir, and accordingly the water would not flow in the desired direction.

Everywhere there is the same chequered story of partial success and humiliating failure. Certainly the times were ripe for a complete change in the system of Irish municipal government, such as was afterwards carried into effect by the great Municipal Corporations Act of 1839.

CHAPTER XIII

A GENERAL REVIEW

HITHERTO in this volume each department of the national life has been isolated, as it were, and treated as a separate entity, comparatively little attention being paid to its possible associations with, or bearings on, other sections of the subject. This plan, while it has its obvious advantages, is open to the objection that it divides the subject into a series of compartments, each self-contained and independent of its neighbours. It has been suggested, therefore, that, before closing, some attempt should be made to review Irish life during the period as a whole, noting its more important tendencies, and indicating the extent and direction of whatever progress was made in Ireland during the first three decades of the nineteenth century. The fascination of the task will in great measure make up for its undeniable difficulty and complexity.

The period began with a great political change, the abolition of the native Parliament and the enactment of a legislative union with the much larger and wealthier island of Great Britain. The effects of this measure were far-reaching. One of its first results was the purification and improvement of

Irish administration. The new Imperial Parliament and its ministers were sharp to see and quick to reform the blemishes of the Irish administrative system. Abuses were redressed and, where it was thought necessary, new organisations were constructed. The abolition of sinecures, the curtailment of the pension list, the establishment of an efficient police and a more impartial magistracy, the reform of the prisons and the founding of public lunatic asylums, were instances of the working of this policy.

Another result of the Union was the introduction of a great moderating influence into Irish politics. The new authorities were not immersed in the storms of Irish controversy, nor were they carried away by the vehement prejudices and animosities which so often lead men of Irish birth into excess. No doubt when the British Government first appeared on the troubled scene in 1801 it had a natural bias to the Protestant side, but it will be admitted by all who study the facts that it soon assumed a more neutral and impartial attitude. It began to exhibit an increasing desire to hold the balance even, to commit no excesses itself and not to countenance or permit their commission by others. With the coming of a new power, which was strong enough to enforce peace and was not a mere ally of either faction, the old-standing feuds gradually died down for lack of that fuel which, in former times, had been continually supplied by the tyrannies and oppressions

of the dominant party. The nineteenth century has not left nearly so large a legacy of bitter memories as the eighteenth. Armed rebellion has been suppressed without wholesale executions and dragoonings. Dangerous conspiracies have been foiled and their leaders punished without making any very large addition to the "martyrs of patriotism."

On the other hand, the great defect of the new system was its tendency to over-centralisation. A strongly centralised government may work well where the conditions are homogeneous throughout the governed countries; it usually fails where there is much diversity of temperament and interests. After the Union it was often too hastily assumed that Ireland was exactly on a par with Great Britain and might be treated in exactly the same way. English statesmen in 1800 had much to learn about Ireland, and indeed the history of the first half of the nineteenth century is largely the story of their gradual acquisition of knowledge as to the essential facts of Irish life. The most remarkable instance of this over-centralisation was to be seen in the domain of finance. Owing partly to their inherent defects and partly to the effects of the war, the financial provisions of the Act of Union caused a heavy strain on the Irish Treasury and a vast accumulation of debt, which led eventually to the amalgamation of the British and Irish exchequers. Thus the power of the purse has come to be exercised almost exclusively from London. The system ensures honesty

and economy, no doubt, but is in some ways too rigid and inelastic to deal adequately with Irish necessities.

In the economic sphere there was both progress and change. Irish agriculture threw itself wholeheartedly into the task of supplying the great British market, with the result that the export of grain and provisions increased rapidly. At the same time the country ceased to be self-sufficing, and began to import more extensively than before, to the great detriment, it would appear, of its native manufactures. The result has been undoubtedly profitable to the nation, though the lost manufactures have left a gap which has never been filled. Subsistence farming has given way to production for a market, and accordingly the standard of living has risen. But it may be questioned whether Ireland did well to put "all her eggs in one basket" as she has done. A country which has only one large industry and only one customer is in a rather hazardous position, especially when it is remembered that many rivals are eagerly bidding for the favours of that customer. If Ireland, as a whole, like her northern province, had other industries to rely on beside agriculture, she would be in a far safer state to-day.

No very great skill or ability was, it must be confessed, shown by the authorities in dealing with religious or social questions. They seem frequently to have been strangely blind to the real factors of a situation, and to have been obliged accordingly to

grope their way feebly and tentatively to a proper solution. Too often their actions exhibited a deplorable want of knowledge, imagination, and sympathy. The obstinate and long-continued resistance to Catholic Emancipation is the most remarkable instance of their defects in this respect. They quite failed to understand the temperament of the Irish Catholic, and did not perceive how deeply he must have resented political disabilities which he considered as an insult to his beloved religion and a punishment deliberately inflicted on those who clung to it. Even when Catholic Emancipation was at last reluctantly and grudgingly granted, years passed without any attempt being made to remove the burden of the tithes.

Similarly, too, there was throughout the period but little attempt to trace the causes of those agrarian discontents which manifested themselves from time to time in local outbursts of violence and outrage. There was very little legislation on the subject between 1800 and 1829, except in the form of repressive measures directed against the tenants. The English statesmen of the time, judging too hastily from the analogy of their own country, seem to have considered the Irish land question as one purely economic in its nature. They were unwilling to interfere in what they thought to be a matter of free contract, of uncontrolled buying and selling in open market. They failed to take into account the human factor,

which is always so important in Irish affairs. Over-population, poverty, and the prevalence of a low standard of living were the chief causes that produced rack-rents, evictions, and agrarian outrages. But it does not appear that the proper diagnosis had yet been made or any steps taken to treat the patient accordingly.[1] Palliatives were, of course, applied from time to time. State-aided emigration was tried, but produced little or no effect. Famines and epidemics were stayed by a liberal expenditure of public funds. But even in 1829 the country had as yet no permanent national organisation for the relief of poverty, such as is now provided by the Poor Law System. The problems of over-population and the low standard of living, which were perhaps almost too great for the capacity of any statesman, were left to be dealt with by "the ghastly surgery of Nature herself" in 1846 and 1847.

The only department of social reform in which any very considerable success was achieved was primary education. Here the government, after an initial failure, eventually hit upon a settlement, which, if not quite ideal, contained at all events the elements of a future working compromise.

The period, as usual in Irish history, presents a chequered picture of success and failure. Taking it as a whole, it would appear that progress was being made. The tide moves slowly, and there are

[1] Not until the Devon Commission of 1844 was the true nature of Irish agrarian problems at all realised in England.

many eddies and side drifts, but still the general flow is forward. Those who work for the amelioration of Ireland must have, above all things, a great patience. The evils they attack are deep-seated and of ancient growth; they do not yield to the first hasty onslaught. It was not possible for the statesmen of the early nineteenth century to remove in three short decades the accumulated grievances and sorrows of six centuries. Since 1829 much more has been done in this direction, and perhaps we are not now far from the day when Ireland will be a prosperous and peaceful country like her many sister lands of the British Empire.

INDEX*

ABDUCTION, 203
Absentee landlords, 64, 85
  public servants, 173
Academical Institution, Belfast, 116, 161
Accounts, municipal, &c., not audited, 194, 299
Administrative reform, 174, 303
Admiralty, 227 *n.*
Advances for public works, 62
Adventurousness of commerce, 40
Advertisers, 115
Advertising, 114
Africa, 232, 290 *n.*
Aged, treatment of, 123, 125, 213
Agents, land, 85, 92
Aghadowey, 241 *n.*
Agrarian problems, disturbances, &c., 13, 87, 204, 208, 232, 306, 307
Agricultural Chemistry, 95
  implements, 34
  labour, wages of, 106
  middle class, 98
Agriculture, Department of, 69, 97
  generally. See contents list of Chap. iii.
  prosperity of, 21, 22, 35, 305
"Agriculturist, itinerant," 96
Aliens, 118, 119
Allihies, 30
America, emigration to, 26 *n.*, 203, 260
  trade with, 28, 29
  money carried to, 74
  privateers from, 250, 251
Ammunition, 241
Amusements, popular, 83, 107–111
Anatomy, 162
Anglesea Street, 192
Animals and their produce, 22, 23, 24, 101
Antrim, 257, 265 (see also Illustrations)
Appointments, sale of, 172
Apprentices, 42, 46, 298
Aristocracy, decadence of, 82
Arithmetic, 148, 154, 155 *n.*
Arklow, 30, 244 *n.*, 266
Armagh, 288
"Armed Associations," 240
Arms, 199, 228, 241
Army, cost of, 66, 67
  generally. See contents list of Chap. ix.
Artificer, skilled, restrictions on emigration of, 259
Artillery, 242
Artisans in cities, 99, 105
"Ascendancy, Protestant," 200
Aspahan, 119 *n.*
Assistant Barristers, 209, 210
Assize of Bread. See "Bread, Assize of"

* As a supplement to the Index, the detailed list of contents at beginning of book will be found useful.

Astronomy, 161 *n.*
"Asylum Harbour," 263
Lunatic. See "Lunatics"
Athlone, 270
Atlantic voyage, hardships of, 260
Attorney-General, 12, 150, 176
Auction duty, 58
Auxiliary forces, 227, 234
Australia, 290 *n.*

BACK Lane Parliament, 9
Bacon, 23, 57, 80, 105
Bagot, J., 45 *n.*
Bagpipes, 109
Bailiff, 228
"Bailing out," 206
Bakers, 73 *n.*, 120
Balbriggan, 266
Ball, W., 43 *n.*
Ballads, 117
Ballast Office, Dublin, 250
Ballinamuck, 224
Ballinasloe, 96
Ballot, conscription by, 236–239
yeomanry entered by, 241
Ballybay, 16
Ballyquin, 282 *n.*
Baltimore, 169
Bandon, 241 *n.*
Bank-note issues, &c., 71–74
of Ireland notes and tokens, 71–73
Bankruptcy, national, fears of, 52, 53
Bantry, 266
Barley, 78
Baronial Police, 203 *n.*
Barrack Department, 186
Street, 284
Barracks, 281, 284 *n.*
Barrister, Assistant, 209, 210
magistrate to be a, 214
Barrow Navigation, 274
Barter in vogue, 74
Basin, the City, 289,
Battle Axe Guards, 172 *n.*
Beamish & Crawford, 26
Bedding, 125
Bedding, infection of, &c., 282–284
issue of, 286
Beef, 23, 57
Beer, production of, &c., 25, 26, 31
taxation of, 58, 59, 66
as an article of diet, 59, 66, 105
considered a "temperance drink," 26 *n.*
"Beggars, sturdy," treatment of, 124
Beggar's Badge. See Illustrations
infection carried by, 280
Begging by debtors, 220
Belfast Academical Institution, 116, 161
Chamber of Commerce, 42 *n.*
gunpowder outrage, 44
cotton manufacture introduced in poorhouse, 32
Corporation, water supply, Charitable Society, &c., 299, 300
impressment at, 253
port, trade and improvement of, 263
mail and canal communication, 270, 274, 275
Lunatic Asylum, 288
Bell, Dr., 153, 154 *n.*
Belles Lettres, 116
Benburb Street, 284 *n.*
Bergen, 251 *n.*
Bermingham Tower, 192
Betting, 110, 111
Bianconi, 275 *n.*
Bible, distribution of, 141
use of, in education, 156, 159
Birmingham, 75
Bishops. See contents list of Chap. v.
Protestant, educational queries addressed to, 150
Roman Catholic, readiness to accept veto, &c., 10; received by George IV., 12

Black, Dr. R., 135 *n.*
Bleeding, 286
Blessington Street, 290
Blind man's buff, 110
Blistering, 286
Blood, Neptune, 295
Bluecoat School, 161 *n.*
"Boarding out" from Foundling Hospital, 126
school at Maynooth, 164
Boats, local production of, 34
return as to, 225
Bog Improvement Commissioners, 94
Bogs, 76, 122
Books, dearness and scarcity of, 111, 116, 149
educational, publishing of, 160
seditious and immoral, fears of, 155 *n.*
Borough compensation (Union), 55
Botanic Garden, 95
Botany, 116
"Bottle riot," 13
Boulton, M., 75
Bounty system, 21, 35
Boycotting, 144, 212 *n.*, 256
"Boyne Infantry," the, 241 *n.*
Boyne Street, 292 *n.*
Brandy, 29
Bread, Assize of, 35, 120
as an article of diet, 78, 104, 125
dearth of, 73 *n.*
Breakfasts, free, to school children, 153 *n.*
"Brennan on the moor," 273
Brewing industry, its encouragement, &c., 25 *n.*, 31, 35, 78
Bribery, 49, 85, 176, 206, 207
Bridges, 193, 225, 300
Britain, Great, 275
migratory labourers going to, 107
passports required for passengers to, 120
Britain, Great, militia sent from, 235
economic relations with. See contents list of Chap. i.
financial relations with. See contents list of Chap. ii.
Brixham trawler, 266
"Buckeens," 99
Building trade, 33
Buildings, public, 193
Bull, North, 255, 262
Bullocks, 79, 130
used for ploughing, 81
Bureaucracy, Irish, 12, 69
Burglary, 213 *n.*
Butter, as an article of diet, 125
rents paid in, 74
superstition as to, 145
trade, 23, 57; falling off in, 42
Butter-milk, 81, 125

CABBAGE, 125
Cabin, mud, construction, rent, &c., of, 34, 89, 101
used as school, 148; barracks, 186 *n.*, 229
Cabra, 107 *n.*
Calculus, the, 161 *n.*
"Calvary preachers," 135
Camac, Kyan and Camac. See Illustrations
Camden, Earl, 170
Canada, 251
Canal, Grand and Royal. See under "G" and "R"
ship, proposal for, 262
colliery owned by a, 29
Canals, traffic on, possible improvements, &c., 269, 273, 277
construction of, by Irish and Imperial Parliaments, 50, 94
labour troubles, 44
attacks on, 123
water supply from, 289, 290
advantageous position of Limerick in relation to, 265

Capital, lack of, for agricultural purposes, 84, 86
"Caravans," 269, 275
"Caravats," 201
Carders, 201
Cards for educational purposes, 154
Carhampton, Lord, 254
Carleton, 117, 201 *n.*
Carlow, 22
Caroline, the, 251
Carpenters, 102, 106
Carrignavar, 45
Cars mounted on runners, 272
Carts, local production of, 34
returns concerning, 225
Castle, Dublin, 5, 33 *n.*, 187 *n.*, 192, 214, 296
Castlebar, 224, 234
Castlecomer. See Illustrations
Castlereagh, Lord, 3, 53, 55, 169, 181 *n.*
Catherine, St., parish of, 151 *n.*, 190
Catholic Church, Roman, clergy of, &c., 45, 109 *n.*, 233, 241, 285; and see also under "Priests" and contents of Chap. v.
Emancipation, 306; and see also contents list of Introductory Chapter.
Catholics, Roman, effect of Penal Laws on, 82
societies of, 199
hostility of Dublin Corporation to, 298
in yeomanry, 241
and education. See contents list of Chap. vi.
general attitude, &c., of, and relations with Protestants. See contents list of Chap. v.
Cattle trade, 23, 77, 79
efforts to improve breed of, holding of shows, &c., 96
military returns as to, 225
Cattle-driving, 212 *n.*
Cavalry, horses for, 110
"Cellars, lodging," 104
Census, 80 *n.*, 190, 191
Centralisation, 54, 304
Cess, County, 193
Chancellor, Lord, 3, 129, 139, 164
Chaplains, 138, 142, 216, 221
Chapter Place, 292 *n.*
Charities and Charitable Societies, 103, 121, 146, 280, 281, 300
Charleville, Lord. See Illustrations
Charms, belief in, 145
Charter Schools, 128, 148
Chemistry, 95, 116, 162
Chichester family, 299
Chief, tribal, landlord occupying place of, 91
Chef Secretary. See "Secretary, Chief"
Child labour, 43 *n.*, 122
Children born in gaol, 217
destitute, homes for, 125, 126, 167
treatment of, 126, 128 *n.*, 145
Church, Established, clergymen of, acting as magistrates, 204
Street, 283, 284
Churches, various. See contents list of Chap. v.
Cities. See under "Towns"
Civil charges, 67
List, 48, 67, 68
Service; see also contents list of Chap. vii.; expenditure, growth of, 68
Clare, election, 15, 16
Lord, 3, 164, 166
smuggling, 257, 266
Classes, description of, 98
Classics, 161
Clay floors and walls, 81, 101
Cleanliness, results of lack of, 81, 283
Cleansing, public, 291–293
Clergymen, 204, 205, 220, 282 *n.*; and see also Chap. v.

Clerks, impressment of, 253
Clifton, 132, 173
Climate, 77
Clongowes, 163
Clothing, domestic production of, Ireland a self-sufficing country, 20, 31 *n.*, 80
appeal to support "home manufacture," 41
distribution of, to children and adults, 153 *n.*, 286
disinfection of, 255, 282, 283
Irish, supplied to Wellington's army, 246
Coaches, local production of, 34; see also contents list of Chap. xi.
Coachsmiths, 42
Coal as a fuel, 95 *n.*, 249
Irish, utilisation of, 29, 30
English, import increasing, 35
porters, 144
price of, 105
yards maintained by State, 120
Coasting trade, 39
Cobbles, 292
Coercion, 13
Coinage, 70–75
Coining, 213 *n.*, 218 *n.*
College Green, 296
Colliery at Castlecomer. See Illustrations
Colonial trade, 38
Colporteurs, 141
Colville, Mr., 74 *n.*
Combinations, trade, laws &c. affecting, 43
Commander-in-Chief, 129
Commerce, Chambers of, 40, 42
Commercial community, the, 39, 40
Commercial side of journalism developed, 114
Communications, improvement of, 20, 34, 227; and see also contents list of Chap. xi.
Compensation, Union, 55
Competition, British, effects of, 21
Competition for land, effects of, 87, 88
Concentration, military, 229, 240
Congested Districts Board, 97
Connemara, 266
Connaught, migratory labourers, 45, 107
invasion, 224
military measures, 227
"Defenders" sent into navy, 254
hostility to labourers from, 45
See also "West of Ireland"
Conscription, forms of, 236, 252
Consolidated Fund, 54, 67, 68
Constables, 214, 237
Constabulary, Royal Irish, foundation, &c., of, 108, 211
See also under "Police"
Convention Act, 9
Conveyances, military return as to, 225
Convicts, treatment of, &c., 216–221, 287
sent into army, 232
Copper mine, 30
coinage, 71, 75
Cork city, provision and subsidiary trades in, 79
fever epidemic, 281–285
mail arrangements, 270, 275
possible canal to, 274
Catholic "jubilee" at, 143
North Gate used as a prison, 219
butter trade, 24
production of beer at, 26
"support of home industry" at, 41
lack of silver currency, 74
overcrowding, 103
Institution, 115
coal yard, 120
water supply, 300
Corporation and Friendly Club, 299
Wide Streets Commissioners, 300

Cork city, impressment at, 253
port of, 264
place-hunting at, 169
Cork county, landlord influence, 88
copper mine, 30
hostility to Kerrymen, 45
forts in, 53
difficulty of raising money in, 74
smuggling, 257
Corn, production and export of, effect of bounties, duties, &c., 21, 22, 37, 78, 93
bad method of thrashing, 81
Assize of Bread regulated by price of, 36
restrictions on malting, export, &c., 25
supply, starch-making discouraged, 37
high imports at present, 29
mills, 31
harvest, migratory labourers, 107
Cornwallis, Lord, 3, 55, 224
Corporations. See under names of each, and also in contents list of Chap. xii.
Correspondent, the, 112 *n.*
Corruption, 168, 299
Corry, J., 27 *n.*
Cottiers, 89, 98
Cotton manufacture, 21, 32, 33
Council, Order in, 38 *n.*
Counterfeits, 72, 73, 185
Countervailing duties, 35
Country districts, wages in, 42, 106
dietary, clothing, method of living, &c. See contents lists of Chaps. iii. and iv.
lack of hospitals or other relief organisations in, 103, 279
newspapers established, 114 *n.*
dispensaries in, 280
inhabitants impressed for navy, 253
Country gentry, character and powers of, 24, 27, 98–100, 193 203, 208
County surveys, 97, 190
Infirmaries, 279
Court Judges, 209 *n.*
prisons, 220
government, system of, 193, 194
cess, 193
military returns as to, 225 ; ballot arrangements, 236–239
Court-houses, 62
Courts, Law, fees in, 215
Cove of Cork, 264
Cowpock Institution, 278
Cows, 81, 89, 130
Crawford, Beamish &, 26
Credit, vote of, 67
Crime, professional, 213
Criminal Law, severities, &c., of, 136, 232
Criminals sent into army, 230
Croghan Kinshela, 30
Crookhaven, 169
Cross-channel traffic, 23, 120, 248, 261
Crown Lands, 63
Cure, miraculous, attempt to perform, 145
Curing industry, 31, 80
Curragh, 110, 272
Currency, 70–75, 89
Custom House, Dublin, 50 *n.*
Customs, wide scope of, 57, 255
produce of, 63
office abuses, 171
encounters with smugglers and wreck plunderers, 187 *n.*, 202, 228, 255–258
complication of laws, 36, 182
suggested reforms in staff, 178 *n.*
once controlled by Chief Secretary, 179
control of, passes to British Treasury, 183 *n.*
relief of, 62
high, effects of, 19, 36
and habits of the people. See contents list of Chap. iv.

DAIRIES as creators of nuisances, 292
Dairy farms, 21, 78, 80, 130
Dalkey, 292
Dancing, 109, 110
Deal, 227 *n.*
Death duty, 64
Debt, National, 304; and see also contents list of Chap. ii.
Debtors, treatment of, 39, 182, 220
Deeds, Registry of, 192
Defenders, 254
Defiance, the, seamen executed on, 254
Deficits, 47, 51
Delegates, Catholic, 9
Democracy, aversion to, 45
Lord Longueville's remark as to, 88
Demonstrators, agricultural, 69, 96
Deputy, duties discharged by, 171, 237
Desertion from army, 231, 238
Destitution, 124, 125
Devon Commission, 307 *n.*
trawlers, 266
Dialects, 116
Dietary, 78, 81, 103–105
"Diligences," 269
Dillon, R., 282 *n.*
Diocesan schools, 146
Dirty habits due to lack of water, 290
Disaffection, nature of, military and other measures against, 199–201, 228, 231, 240
Disbanded soldiers and sailors, 122 *n.*, 280
Discipline, military, weakness of, 229, 230, 234
Disease, 104, 125, 180, 260; and see also contents list of Chap. xii.
Disinfection, 255, 281, 283, 286
Disinterment by a magistrate, 205
"Disorderly women," treatment of, 124, 140 *n.*
Dispensaries, 280
Disputations, public, 142
Distilling, barley grown for, 78
illicit, 25, 184, 202, 205, 208 232, 258
industry, 31, 35
prohibition of, 25
Distress, relief of, 33, 67, 121–126, 136
Distressed employers, loans to, 33
Disturbances, causes of, &c., 198
Docks, 263
Doctors, 282 *n.*, 286
Dodder river, 289
D'Olier, Mr., 74 *n.*
Dollars, recoining of, 73
Dollymount, 255
Donaghadee, 263, 275
Donegal, 251 *n.*, 257
Donegall, Marquis of, 299
Donnybrook Fair, 109
Donovan, Father, 45 *n.*
Down, County, 257, 272
"Doyle, Moll, and her Children," 201
Drainage, 94, 291–293
Drapery, 29
"Drawbacks" on export, 35, 57
Drawing, teaching of, 156
Dressmaking, 80
Drill in schools, 153
secret, 198
Drivers, military return as to, 225
Drunkenness, 83, 109, 217
Dublin, corn supply, 93
cattle show, 96
highwaymen near, 272
epidemic in, water supply, lighting, &c. See contents list of Chap. xii.
Archbishop of, 137
policing of, 212–215
professional crime in, 213
Corporation, 189, 214, 291, 298
prisons, 216

Dublin, insurrection in, 3–5
traders, &c., on Catholic Committee, 6
theatres, bottle riot, &c., 13, 295
first steamer from, 23 *n.*
weavers, custom of, 33 *n.*
coachsmiths, 42
shoemakers, 44
improvement by Irish Parliament, 50
effect of hearth tax on, 56
overcrowding in, 103, 283
State coal yard in, 120
price of coal at, 105
fairs near, 109
football at, 107 *n.*
effect of lotteries, 111 *n.*
newspaper circulation, 112
"Fingallian" spoken near, 116 *n.*
institutions. See under names of each
fishery company, 267
telegraph to Galway, 227
concentration of troops at, 229
reviews of volunteers at, 243 *n.*
education in, 151, 161
census of population, 190
wrecks in bay, 248
port of, 262
tokens issued in. See Illustrations
Society, the, 43 *n.*, 95, 115, 191
University, proposed Catholic college, in, 164
cost of coach to Galway, 276 *n.*
Dunleary, 263
Dunmore, 263, 275
Dun's Hospital, 283, 284
Dutiable commodities, consumption of, 53
"Duty Fowl," 89

EAST of Ireland, 85, 247; and see under "Leinster"
Education, 69, 114, 115, 136, 195, 307; and see also contents list of Chap. vi.
Education in prisons, 221
proselytising by means of, 83 *n.*, 141
Elections, 15, 88, 102, 228
Eliza, the, 258
Elizabeth, Queen, 146
Emancipation, Catholic. See Introductory Chapter
Embargoes, 37, 38
Embezzlement, 172, 173
Emetics, 285
Emigration, 72 *n.*, 253, 259, 307
Emmet, Robert, 3–5
Employers, 99
distressed, loans to, 33
relations with workmen, 43, 44, 46
Employment, relief by, 122, 123, 286
rushes in search of, 261
lack of, leads to enlisting, 26, 230
Encumbered Estates Act, 100
Endowed schools, 146, 156, 161
Endowment of Roman Catholic Church, 10, 17
England, borrowings in, 51
Ireland the "granary" of, 22
provisions obtained from, 122
See also under "Britain, Great"
English literature, 117
soldiers, indifference to politics, 233 *n.*
Enlistment, 26, 230
Ennis, 16
Enniskillen, 270
Epidemics, 56; and see also contents list of Chap. xii.
Epileptics, 288
"Erasmus Smith Schools," 161
Essex Bridge, 296
Established Church, 148, 204; and see also list of contents of Chap. v.
Estate duty, 63, 64
Euclid, 161 *n.*

Evangelical tone of Protestantism, 141
Evictions, 85, 87, 307
Exchange, gain and loss on, 63, 75
Exchequer, Irish, Chancellor of, position and power, 179 *n.*
Revenue, 67
Exchequers, amalgamation of, 52, 54, 304
Excise, wide range of, produce, &c., 57, 58, 63, 183
greatly increased produce of, 64
and whiskey distilling, 24
abuses in staff of, 171
controlled by Chief Secretary, 179
passes into hands of Treasury, 183 *n.*
encounters with illicit distillers, 187 *n.*, 202
"Exclusive dealing," 144
Expenditure, arrangements as to, 52
statistics of, 67
Export, 19, 20, 21–28
calculations based on, 53
drawbacks, 57
Exporters, faults of, 42
"Expresses," 227, 276, 277
Extortion, 171, 217

FACTION fights, 202, 228
Factions, municipal, 299
Factories, inspection of, 42
Fairies, 145
Fairs, 79, 109, 200
Fairview, 262
Famine, 102, 125, 180, 307 ; and see also under "Distress, Relief of"
Farming by schoolmasters, 147
Society, the, 96
See also contents list of Chap. iii.
Fees, law, abuses in connection with, 215
Female kidnapped, 203
Female convicts, 216 *n.*, 217
See also "Women"
Fermoy, 273
Feudalism, relics of, 88
Feuds, 202, 207 *n.*
Fever, 56, 290, 301 ; and see contents list of Chap. xii.
Field sports, 107
Fighting as an amusement, 108
Finance, Chief Secretary's powers, 179
excessive centralisation, 304
See also contents list of Chap. ii.
Fines, 208
"Fingallian" spoken, 116 *n.*
Fireplaces, duty on, 56
First Fruits Commissioners, 128
Fish, consumption of, 105
curing, 31
industry, 267
Fishermen and life-saving, 249
and privateer, 250 *n.*
habits of, &c., 266, 267
Fivepenny-pieces, 73
Flags, signalling, 227
paving, 292
"Flanders, Moll," 149, 152
Flax, 78
seed, 29, 37 *n.*
Fleece as weaver's emblem, 33 *n.*
Flint, C. W., 8 *n.*, 175 *n.*, 189 *n.*, 288 *n.*
Flood, Mr., 242
Rev. Dr., 164
Floods, 272
Floors, clay, 81, 101
Flour, 22, 29, 36, 73 *n.*, 104
Flower roots, 57
Floyd, Gen., 245 *n.*
"Fluxions," 161 *n.*
"Fly waggons," 269
Folk-lore, 145
Food, home supply of, 20 *n.*, 28, 31, 77
poor, effects of, 278

Food, distribution of, to convalescents, 286
low standard of, 102
gratuitous distribution to be avoided in relief of distress, 123
in cities, 104, 105
in country, 77, 81, 89
State efforts to secure cheapness of, 167
on ships, 268
in gaols, 217
Football, 107 *n.*, 108
"Ford," the, 264
Foreign names on pension list, 49
priests arrested, 143
trade, 24, 28
Forestallers, 46
Forgery, 213 *n.*
Fortifications, 51, 53, 191 *n.*, 225
"Forty-shilling freeholders," 15, 17
Fossils, 57
Foster, 53
Foundation schools, 146, 147
Foundling Hospital, 126
Fountains, public, 290, 291, 300
Four Courts, 192
"Fowl, duty," 89
Foyle, Lough, 253, 265
Franchise, municipal, 298
parliamentary, 15, 17
Frankincense, 57
Frauds by exporters, 42
"Free trader," 256
Freeholders, 15, 17, 102
Freeman's Journal, 112 *n.*
Freemasons, 119 *n.*, 199 *n.*
Freights, high, effect of, 19
French, disaffected in correspondence with, 5, 198, 199
invasion, 222–224
privateers, 250
Revolution, dislike of Catholic clergy to principles of, 138
French language, teaching of, 162
Friendly Club, 299
Frieze, 106
Fuel, 105, 167
Furniture, making of, 31, 34
support of Irish, 41

GALTEE mountains, 272
Galway, coach to, 276 *n.*
gaol, 203
streets unlighted, 300
fishermen, 251 *n.*, 266
smuggling, 257
telegraph to, 227
Gambling, 109–111, 217
Gaols, lunatics in, 287
burials in, 205
witnesses detained in, 207
fever in, 219
recruits from, 230
See also under "Prisons"
Garden, Botanic, 95
Garrison, maintenance and control of, 51, 179, 186, 234; and see also contents list of Chap. ix.
Gas lighting, 294–296
Gaugers, 228
Gentry, Catholic, influence of, 6
country, character and influence of, 24, 27, 98–100, 129, 193, 203, 208
Geology, 116, 119
Geometry, 156 *n.*
George III., 3
George IV., 12, 199
Gibraltar, 254
Gin, 29
Glasnevin, 95
Glass, duty on, 184
and Bottle Club, 299
Glebes, 129
Glue manufacture, 79
Gold mine, 30
coinage, 70, 71, 75
Goods, transportation of, 277
Goulburn, 12, 181 *n.*
Government, "expresses," 276
working a gold mine, 30
bribery by, 49
relations with Bank of Ireland, 71

Government, crying down counterfeits, 73
conducting lotteries, 110
subsidising newspapers, 113
educational policy of, 152, 159, 165
attitude to rising university, 162
and Dublin water supply, 291
entrusting public works to local bodies, 187
encouraging fisheries, 267
See also under "State" and contents lists of Chaps. vii. and viii.
Grain, 305; and see under "Corn"
"Granary of England," the, 22
Grand Canal, coal mine, 29
traffic, 265, 274
water supply from, 289
Grand Juries, advances to, 62
infirmaries maintained by, 279
administration of, 187, 191, 193, 194
police maintained by, 202, 211
prisons mismanaged by, 220
Grand seigneur landlords, 84
Granite, 292
Grass, 77
Grattan, Henry, support of Emancipation, 9, 10
approval of brewing industry, 25 *n.*
navy vote passed by, 48
and Union finance, 53, 54
use of volunteers by, 242
Gravel, 292
Grazing and graziers, 98, 130
Greek, 162
Gregory, W., 176, 181 *n.*
Guides, return as to, 225
Guilds, 298
Guineas, appreciation of, 71, 72 *n.*, 73
replaced by sovereigns, 75
Guinness & Co., foundation of, 26
Gunboats for river defence, 227
Gunpowder outrage, 44
Gutter, open, abolition of, 292

HAIR, disinfection of, 255
powder, duty on, 55
"Half-gentlemen," 99
Halfpennies, 74
Ham, 23
Hamburg, 113, 254
Hamilton, Sir W., 166
Hamstringing, 229
Harbours, construction, &c., of, 62, 94, 185; and see also contents list of Chap. x.
Hardware, 29
Hardwicke, Lord, 3, 28, 55 *n.*, 164, 181, 226
Harold's Cross, 289 *n.*
"Harp, head or," origin of phrase, 75
Harrogate, 173
Harvest, migratory labourers, 107
bad, effects of, 50, 280
Hats, 96, 184
Hautenville, 57
Hawkesbury, Lord, 38 *n.*
Health, Boards of, 281
public. See contents list of Chap. xii.
Hearth tax, 56, 184
Hebrew, 162
Hedge schools, 148, 149
Henrietta Street, 192
Henry VIII., 24, 146
Hibernian Journal, 113 *n.*, 115
Marine Society, 161 *n.*
Society (London), 148 *n.*
Hides, 79
Highwaymen, 149, 213 *n.*, 272
Hill, Rowland, 185 *n.*
Historical legends, 117
History, modern, teaching of, 166
Hoarding, 70, 83
Hockey, 108 *n.*
Holiday-making, 83, 109
Holyhead, 255, 261, 263, 275

Home industry, appeal to support, 41
Home market, production for, 19
Hoofs, 79
Horse police, 214
Horse-racing, 109, 110
Horses, efforts to improve breed of, 97, 110
military return as to, 225
Hospitals, 62, 125; and see also contents list of Chap. xii.
Hotels, 274
Houghing, 201, 229
Housing, rural, 101, 102
urban, 104
Howth, 262, 266, 267, 275
Humbert, Gen., 224
Hunt, Sir V., 30 *n.*
"Hunt-the-slipper," 110
Hurling, 108
Husbandry, encouragement of, 95 *n.*
Hypocrite, The, performance of, 205

IDLENESS, punishment of, 124
in gaols, 218
Ignorance, results of, 84, 144
Illiteracy, 112, 116
Immoral books, fears of, 155 *n.*
"Immoral journeyman," the, 43 *n.*
"Imperial contribution," the, 67, 70
Implements, agricultural, efforts to improve, 96; various, local production of, 31, 34
manufacturing, loan of, 27
Import duties, 32
Imports of manufactures, &c., 19, 20, 29
Union calculations based on, 53
Impressment for the navy, 38, 252, 267
Imprests, 63
Improvidence, results of, 100
Incendiarism, 201, 228
Income, national, statistics of, 63
Income-tax, 63, 64, 66
Incumbered Estates Act, 100
India, 154 *n.*, 232
trade with, 39, 259, 264
Indies, West. See "West Indies"
Individualism, weakness of, 167
Individuals, private, efforts by, 93, 190
State interference in life of, 118
Industry, Dublin Society and, 95; see also contents list of Chap. i.
House of, Dublin, 123–126; and fever epidemic, 283, 284
Houses of, 121, 123; lunatics in, 287; religious broils, 142
Industry privateer, 251
Inefficiency, agriultural, causes of, 82, 83
Infected goods, treatment of, 255
"Infection," distribution of packets of, 279
Infectious disease, causes of, 104; and see also Chap. xii.
Infirm, treatment of the, 123, 125, 167, 213
Infirmaries, County, 279
Informers, 206
Inheritance, Catholics not allowed to acquire land by, 82
Inland carriage, 93
navigation, 22; and see also under "Canals"
Innishowen, 265
Inns, 256, 271, 274
Inoculation for smallpox, 279
Inquiry, Commissions of, 133, 175, 177
Insane. See under "Lunatics"
Inspection of schools, 152, 160; workshops, 42; prisons, 220

Institutions, public, chaplains appointed, 138, 142
See under names of each
Insurance, life, 61
marine, 268
companies' lifeboats, 248
Insurrection, 3–5, 222
Intellectual life, 111–118
Interest, high rate of, 52
"Intermediate," the, 165
Internal trade, 19, 31–34
Intimidation, 45, 88
Intoxicating liquors, licence to sell, 58
Invasion, French, 224
precautions against, 223–227
Irish language, dialects of, lack of an accessible literature in, &c., 116, 117
Scripture-reading and preaching in, 135, 142
taught in a Belfast school, 162
Irish Office, 8 *n.*, 175
Iron import, 29
"Itinerant agriculturists," 96
Itinerant beggars, 280

JACOBINISM, clerical fears of, 139
in Ulster, 163
James's Street, 289
Jesuits, 163
Jobbery, 168, 173, 194, 299
John, King, 280 *n.*
Jones, Frederick, 295
"Journeyman, the immoral," 43 *n.*
Judges, 193, 194
Juries for Wide Streets Commissioners, 297
Grand. See "Grand Juries"
Justice, Lord Chief, 164
Justices of the Peace. See "Magistrates"
Lords. See "Lords Justices"

"KALECANNON," 125
Kerry, Knight of, 39 *n.*
Kerry, rents paid in butter, 74
smuggling, 257
Kerrymen, hostility to, 45
Kidnapping, 203
Kildare county, corn-growing in, 22
United Irishmen, 5
schools in, 163
highwaymen, 272
horse-racing at Curragh, 110
Kildare Place Society, 116, 151–160
Kilkenny county, corn-growing in, 22
coaching, 270
relief of distress, 122
Gaol, 205
Killala, 224
Killenaule, 29
Killiney, 272
Kilmainham Gaol, 216
Kilpeacon, 122
Kilwarden, Lord, 5, 164
King, the, Civil List for, 48
King's County, 45
Plates, 110
Kingstown, 122, 187 *n.*, 263
Kinsale, 248, 266, 267

LABORATORY, 95
Labour, agricultural, wages of, 106; stipulations for, in leases, 89
troubles, 44, 201
hours and wages of, 42, 106
market congested, 122 *n.*, 280
Labourers, travelling in search of employment, 261
migratory, 107
agricultural, state of, 89
State interest in, 195
Lagan river, 263, 274
Lamps, oil, 249, 293
Lancashire, competition from, 31, 32
Lancaster, Joseph, 153, 154
Land administration, 69

Land, disturbances connected with, 201, 202
purchase, 195
tenure, &c. See contents list of Chap. iii.
Landlords, absentee, 64, 85
influence at elections, 15, 88, 102
issue of tokens by, 75; and building of schools, 159
influence with militia, 237
administration of justice by, 204
in Dublin, 293
See also contents list of Chap. iii.
Landwaiters, 255
Lasteyrie, Comte de, 156 *n.*
Latin, 162
Latocnaye, Sieur de, 120 *n.*
Lay school at Maynooth, 163
Lead mines, 30
Leases, agricultural, 82, 84, 85, 89
Lectures, 69, 95, 115
Leeks, 125
Legacy tax, 64
Legal documents, care of, 192
Legends, 117, 144
Leinster, cotton manufacture, 32
defence of, 227
labourers migrating to, for harvest, 107
See also "East of Ireland"
Duke of, 160 *n.*
Leper Hospital, Waterford, 280
Lever, 117
"Liberty" weavers, custom of, 33 *n.*
fever epidemic and water supply, 283, 290, 291
Libraries, school, 156
Licences, 58
Lifeboats, 248
Liffey, navigation of, 262
Light, tax on, 56
Lighthouses, 248, 249
Lighting of Dublin, &c., 293–296, 300
Lime-washing, 283 *i*
Limerick city, canals to, 264, 274
mayor and United Trades, 45
mail coaches to, 270
port of, 264
lunatic asylum, 288
neglect of roads, &c., 300
Limerick county, dairy farms, 80
corn-growing, 22
silver and lead mines, 30
Linen Acts, 43
Board, character and workings of, 27, 28, 37 *n.*
industry, 21, 26, 27, 32, 263
weavers, farming by, 78, 91
Linsey-woolsey, 106
Literature, vernacular, lack of, 116
Littlehales, Sir E., 236 *n.*
Living, cost of, 106
standard of, 305, 307
Loans for service of State, 51, 52, 54, 63
to distressed manufacturers, 33
Local taxation, 62, 63, 64, 67
Locomotion. See Chap. xi.
"Lodging cellars," 104
Logic, 162
London, 227 *n.*, 277
Hibernian Society, 148 *n.*
financial control exercised from, 54
newspapers, 113
Londonderry city, mail coaches, 275
Glass and Bottle Club, 299
mistake over water supply, 301
impressment for navy at, 253
port of, 265
Londonderry county, composition of yeomanry, 241 *n.*
"Long cars," 275 *n.*
"Long line" used in fishing, 267
Longford county, 224

Longueville, Lord, 74 *n.*, 88
Loop Head, 264
Lord Lieutenant, arrangements in absence of, 129
decline in power of, 180, 181
robes of, 192
Lords, House of, 9
Justices, 129
Lotteries, produce and manner of conducting, 60, 62, 63
demoralisation due to, 110, 111
"expresses" organised on behalf of, 277
Louth election, 15
"Love, Garden of," 149
Love-letters, fear of servants writing, 155 *n.*
Lover, 117
Lunatics, treatment of, foundation of asylums, 125, 220, 287–289, 303
Luxuries, taxes on, 59, 65
Lynn, privateer from, 251

MACADAMISING, 292
M'Bride, John. See Illustrations
M'Call, S., letter of, 24 *n.*
M'Carthy, 169
Justin, 45 *n.*
Machinery, effects of introduction of, 31, 32, 33
Madden, 169
Magistracy, professional, founding of, 12, 211
Magistrates, and factory inspection, 42
issuing passes to coal-carriers, 29
recruited from landowning class, 88
Sabbatarianism of, 141 *n.*
attitude to Catholics, 143
power as to "suspects," 118
lack of effective support, 228
reliance on yeomanry, 243
Magistrates, connivance at certain forms of illegality, 256
See also contents list of Chap. viii.
Mails, 262, 263; and see also Chap. xi.
Maize, 121
Malahide Bank. See Illustrations
Malo, St., 250 *n.*
Malting forbidden, 25
Manufacture, encouragement of, 95 *n.*
home, appeal to support, 41
loan of implements of, 27
negligence in, 42
See also Chap. i.
Manufactured goods, import of, 29
Manufacturers, distressed, loans to, 33
issue of tokens by, 75
Manufactures, Irish, decline of, 21, 35, 305
Marine Society, Hibernian, 161 *n.*
Mark, St., parish of, 292 *n.*
Marriages, 74, 137
Marsden, A., 4, 8, 181
Marseilles, 119 *n.*
Martello towers, 226
Maryborough, 272
Masons, 106
Massachusetts, 251
Mathematics, 156, 161, 162, 166
Maynooth College, 139, 163
Meadow, 77
Meal, wages paid in, 122
"Meal months," 77
Meat, salt, 31, 268
seldom eaten by peasantry, 78
as an article of diet, 105, 125
Mechanics, skilled, emigration restricted, 259
teaching of, 156 *n.*
Mecklenberg-Strelitz, Prince of, 49
Mensuration, 156 *n.*
Mercantile education, 161
Mercer's Hospital, 280

Merchantmen, improved position of crews of, 267
self-defence by, 251, 252
Merchants, 99
Metal water mains, 291
Metaphysics, 162
Methodists, 135
Middle class, customs, &c., of, 24, 99
taxable capacity of, 66
religion of, 129
serving in yeomanry, 241
Middlemen, 85, 86, 92
Midlands, 85, 265, 277
Migratory labourers, 107
Milford, New, 263, 275
Military Department, Chief Secretary's Office, 179
establishment, cost of, 47
guard to gaols, 217
protection to canals, 44
service, Quakers' objection to, 135
topography, 191 *n.*
affairs; see also contents list of Chap. ix.
Militia, cost of, 51, 67
discipline and behaviour of, 224, 230, 234
organisation, &c., of, 234–240
Milk, 81, 89, 125
Millers, 73 *n.*, 120
Millin, Rev. G., 166 *n.*
Mills, 31
Mineralogy, 116
Mines, 29, 30
Mint, 70, 71, 74
"Mobility," development of, 227
Model school, 152
Monaghan county, 16
Money, difficulty of raising large sums of, 74
Monitors, 153, 154
Monks, 17
Monkstown, 248
Moore, Thomas, 117
Moral tone of press, 113
Moral effects of better lighting of Dublin, 296
Mortality, bills of, 278 *n.*
rate of, during typhus epidemic, 282 *n.*, 285
Mountain improvement, 76
sheep, 79
Mourne district, 257, 272
Mulcahy, Rev. J., 157 *n.*
Mullingar, 270
Municipal Corporations Act, 301
token issues, 75
affairs; see also contents list of Chap. xii.
Munster dairy farms, 80
obstruction to removal of provisions, 123
provision trade, 264
See also "South of Ireland"
Murder, 212 *n.*
Mutilation, 212 *n.*
Mutinies, naval and military, 231, 254
Mutton, 80

NATIONAL Debt. See "Debt, National," and contents list of Chap. ii.
National Education Board, 160
Nationalists, 17, 242, 246
Natural Philosophy, 162
Navan, 141 *n.*
Navigation Act, 38
dangers of, 247, 268
inland, 22 *n.*; and see also under "Canals"
taught in school, 161 *n.*
Navy, grant for, 48
impressment for, 38, 253, 267
recruits for, from gaols, 230
station of, 264
Neagh, Lough, 274
Necessaries, tax on, 65
"Necessary," provision of a, 293
Needlework, 155
Negligence in manufacture, 42
Nelson, Lord, 233; and see Illustrations

Nepotism, 85
New Ross, 244 *n.*
New York, 251
Newenham, E. W., 30 *n.*, 97, 190
Newfoundland, 267 *n.*
Newgate Prison, 216
Newry, 270, 272
Newspapers, 111–115, 184
Newtown colliery, 29
Nicholson's Court, 284
Nicolson, Capt., 245 *n.*
Noblemen, 48, 172; and see also under "Peers"
North Bull. See "Bull, North"
Chapel, Cork, 143
Gate, Cork, 219
of Ireland, farming in, 91; magistrate's conduct, 204; distress in, 122 *n.*; embryo university, 162; see also "Ulster"
Notes, Bank. See "Bank Notes"
Novelists, rise of, 117
Nurses, 126, 282, 286
Nymph Bank fishery, 266 *n.*

OATH-BOUND societies, 198
Oaths, Quakers' objection to, 135
Oatmeal, 22, 77, 105
Oats, oatcakes, &c., production and consumption of, 22, 77, 78, 91
brought from England, 122
Obedience, personal, of tenants, 89
O'Connell, Daniel, and struggle for Catholic Emancipation, 7–17, 144
influence in founding country newspapers, 114 *n.*
religious basis of movement, 54
membership of, and secession from, Kildare Place Society, 151, 157
See also Illustrations
Officials, number of, 47, 48
compensation to, 55
See also contents list of Chap. vii.
Oil gas, 296 *n.*
mills, 37 *n.*
lamps, 249, 293
Orange societies, oath, &c., of, 199, 200
Orangemen, hostility to Wellesley, 13
anticipated collision with Catholics, 16
influence of, in army, 233 *n.*; in Yeomanry, 241; in Volunteers, 243 *n.*; in corporations, 299
Ordnance Department, 67, 191 *n.*
Survey, 191
Orphans, 49, 68
Orr, J., 241 *n.*
Outrages, agrarian, causes of, 306, 307
partly due to whiskey-drinking, 59
Peel's memorandum as to necessity of proof, 204
military, due to bad discipline, 229
See also contents list of Chap. viii.
Overcrowding, 103, 278, 286
Over-population, 307
Over-production, causes of, 26 *n.*
Oxen, 23, 79

PACKET-BOAT, 248
Packing, defects in, 42
Paper, cost of, 111, 149
supply of, to Government, 188
tax, 58, 184
Parish, military returns from, 225
raising of soldiers by, 237, 239
subdivisions of, 208 *n.*
watchmen, 213
Parks, 187
Parliament, Imperial, encouragement of agriculture, 93

Parliament, Imperial, aid to the Church, 129
inquiry into the Church, 133
aid to distressed manufacturers, 33
control of pensions, 68
expenditure on public works, 122
educational inquiry, 150
grants for school building, 159
exertions in connection with records and statistics, 191
spirit of inquiry and reform in, 133, 150, 173, 174, 176
enhanced position of Chief Secretary in, 180
refusal of powers to Paving Board, 294
Parliament, Irish, corn bounties, 93
favour to brewing industry, 25 *n.*
neglect of public health, 278
partial repeal of Penal Code, 2
hostility to rival assemblies, 9
inability to reform Pension List, 49
improvement of Dublin by, and appointment of Wide Streets Commissioners, 50, 296
educational queries, 150
issues for purposes appointed by, 67
withdrawal of Dublin paving, &c., from Corporation, 298
relative unimportance of Chief Secretary in, 181
Parliamentary questions, use of, 174
Parliamentary Reform, 11
Parnell, Sir J., 53
Parsons, Capt. L., 242 *n.*
Parsonstown, 242
Partnerships, village, 90
Party fights, 200, 228
Passengers, 253, 260, 261 ; and see also contents list of Chap. xi.
Passports, 120
Passwords, 198, 199
Pastorini's Prophecies, 144
Pasturage, 21, 77, 78, 90
Patent, privileges granted by, 188
"Patentee" offices, 170, 175, 177, 182
Patrick, St., parish and cathedral of, 287, 292 *n.* ; and see also Illustrations
Patrick's Hill, Cork, 285
Patrols, 223, 243
Paupers, 283, 287 ; and see "Industry, House of"
Paving Board, Dublin, operations of, 291–296
of Dublin withdrawn from Corporation, 298
Pawnbrokers, 111 *n.*
Peace, Justices of. See "Magistrates"
Officers, 214
Peacock Lane, Cork, 285
Pearl-ash, 29
Peasantry, their admiration of highwaymen, 272
behaviour during invasion, 222, 224
low standards of living, 102
See also contents list of Chap. iii.
Peat, 105, 249, 280
Peculation, 177
Pedigree sires, 96
Pedlar's licence, 58
Peel, Robert, administration of, 11, 12
surrender to O'Connell, 16, 17
educational policy of, 150, 151, 152
and Belfast Academical Institution, 162
bribe offered to, 176
method of dealing with famine or pestilence, 122, 180, 281
and "jobs" in public service, 173

Peel, Robert, remark as to need of proving outrages, 204
foundation of police and special magistracy, 211
"Peelers," origin of name, 211
Peers, 6, 27; and see also "Noblemen"
Pelham, 164, 169, 170
Pells, 63
Penal Code against Catholics, 2, 82
Pence, Irish, last issue of, 75
replaced by tokens, 74
Peninsular War, Irish assistance in, 236, 245, 246
Penitentiary, Richmond. See "Richmond Penitentiary"
in House of Industry, 125
system, 221
Penny Post, 185 *n.*
Pens, dearness of, 149
Pension List, abuses, &c., of, 48, 55, 67
controlled by Parliament, 68, 303
Pensioners, military, embodiment of, 229
Pensions, Civil Service, establishment of, 178
Percival, W., 122 *n.*
Perjury, 207
Pestilence, 125, 180, 260; and see also contents list of Chap. xii.
Petty, Sir W., 37
Petty Sessions, 210
Physiology, 162
Pigeonhouse Fort, 5, 262
Pigs, 23, 80
Pikes, 244 *n.*
Pilgrims, 119
Pilots, 248, 255
Pipe Water Committee, 291
Pitt, William, and Catholic Emancipation, 2, 3, 6
letter addressed to, 55
erection of Martello towers by, 226 *n.*
Place-hunters, clerical, 131
in Civil Service, 168, 175
Plague, 254
Ploughing with bullocks, 81
Plunket, 9, 12, 13
Pocket-picking, 213 *n.*
Poets, 117
Police, foundation of, 12, 211–215, 303
Baronial, 203 *n.*
cost of, at present, 69
attitude to footballers, 107 *n.*
regulations, stringency of, 118
situation, application for, 176
in Waterford, state of, 300
lack of a proper force, 228
yeomanry acting as, 243
suppression of faction fights by, 108
Political animosities, disturbances, &c., 83, 198, 208
spirit in Established Church, 131, 133; in Catholic Church, 139; in Civil Service, 170, 172; in Corporations, 297, 298
partisanship of newspapers, 112, 113
corruption, 49
tone of Belfast, 263
attempts on loyalty of army and militia, 231, 234
partisanship of yeomanry, 241
use of volunteers, 242
Economy, 116
Poolbeg, 262
Poor, diet, clothing, housing, &c., of, 80; and see contents list of Chap. iv.
effect on, of confusion in currency, 72, 73, 75
and epidemics. See contents list of Chap. xii.
Society for Education of. See "Kildare Place Society"
and lotteries, 111
theatre-going by, 115

Poor, State and other assistance to, 167; and see under "Distress, relief of"
inadequate water supply to, 290
serving in militia, 234
exemptions from militia ballot, 238
Relief Committee, 123 *n.*
Poorhouse, Belfast, 32
"Popery," hostility to, 8, 88
Population, increase of, 102
numbering of, 190
Pork, 23, 57, 80
Portpatrick, 263, 275
Portugal, trade with, 24, 28
Post Office, expenditure and produce of, 60, 63, 64, 67
conducted at a loss, 64
description of, 185, 186
improvement of communications due to efforts of, 186, 276
Potatoes as an article of diet, 78, 80, 81, 89, 91, 104, 125
culture of, 77, 78
failure of, 121, 123
brought from England, 122
obstruction to movement of, 46, 228
"Potheen," 25, 206 *n.*; also see "Distilling, Illicit"
Poundage, 63
Poverty, results of, 84, 307
Powerscourt House, 184 *n.*
Prayer-books, distribution of, 141, 148
Premiums, Dublin Society, 43 *n.*, 95
educational, 156
Linen Board, 27
Presbyterians, 128, 130, 133–135, 162
"Presentments," 193
Pressgangs, 38, 253
Preventive Water Guard, 208
Prices, regulation of, 35
Priests, proposed State endowment of, 10
Priests, political influence of, 14
provisions concerning, in Emancipation Bill, 17
foreign, arrest of, 143
preaching against soldiers, 233
See also under "Catholic clergy"
Primate, the, 129, 131
Primers, educational, 155
Prison, State, 192
Prisons, condition and reform of, 136, 216–221, 303
used as hospitals, 281
recruits from, 230
Board, development of, 221
See also under "Gaols"
Private effort, achievements of, 94, 95, 190, 294
Privateers, 22, 250
Prizes. See "Premiums"
"Proclaimed Districts," 210
Proctors, Tithe. See "Tithe Proctors"
Procuress, 216 *n.*
Producers, failings of, 42
Production for home market, 19
Professional men on Catholic Committee, 6
police and magistracy, advantages of, 211, 244
Professors, 115
Promotion from grade to grade in Civil Service, 177
Property tax, 63
Prophecies, belief in, 144
Proselytising, 138, 142, 147
Prostitutes, 124, 140 *n.*
Protection as a working system, defects of, 37
Protestant bishops, educational queries to, 150
Protestants, favoured position under Penal Laws, 82
education controlled by, 83 *n.*, 147
attitude to Emancipation, 7
predominance in volunteers, 243 *n.*; in yeomanry, 241

Protestants, fanaticism of, 199
emigration of, 259
dominant in Dublin Corporation, 298
See also contents list of Chap. v.
Provision trade, 21, 34, 263, 264, 305
convoy for, 27 *n.*
subsidiary industries, 79
effect of embargoes, 38
Provisions, scarcity and dearness of, effects of, 121, 201, 286
falling off in quality of, 42
opposition to movement of, 122
destruction of, as a military measure, 225
Irish, sent to Peninsula, 246
Public opinion, weakness of, 88
Publican's licence, 58
Punishments, school, 156
Pupil teachers, 153
Purchase of appointments, 172
Purefoy, 169
Purgatives, 285
Puritanical tone of Protestantism, 141, 205
Puxley, J. L., 30 *n.*

QUAKERS, 40, 135, 153
Quarantine, 254
Quarter Sessions, 209
Chairmen of, 209 *n.*
Quaternions, 166
Quays, construction of, 296, 301
Queen's County, 22, 29
Queenstown. See "Cove"
Questions, parliamentary, use of, 174
Quilty, 249

RACES, horse, 109, 110
on roads, 272
Rack-rents, 87, 307
Railways, effects of introduction of, 23, 271, 273, 274
Rainfall, 77
Rathdrum, 282 *n.*
Rawson, J., 116 *n.*
Reading, 148, 149
prejudice against teaching of, 155 *n.*
Rebates on export, 35, 57
Rebellion, cost of, 51
military measures, &c., against, 224, 228, 304
Ulster and, 135
Rebellious party not favoured by Catholic Church, 138
Rebels serving in the army, 231; in navy, 254
attempts by, on loyalty of army and militia, 231, 234
outrages by, 197
arrest of, as "suspects," 119
Reclamation, land, 94
Record Tower, 192 *n.*
Records, care of, 191, 192
Recruiting for army, 230–233, 239; militia, 236–238
naval, grant for, 48
Redesdale, Lord, 3, 139
Reform, Parliamentary, 11
Refrigeration, 268
Refuse, disposal of, 292
Reginald's Tower, Waterford, 218
Registering departments, 189
"Regium Donum," 134
"Regraters," 46
Religious animosities, 18, 83, 297
differences, societies based on, 198, 199
partiality of magistrates, 204
influences brought to bear on convicts, 221
problems, failure to deal with, 305
difficulty in education, 147
affairs; see also contents list of Chap. v.
Rent, effect of currency troubles on, 73, 74
paid in butter, 74

Rent, influence of "potheen"-making on, 206 *n.*
combinations to influence, &c., 201
landlord magistrates not impartial in cases involving, 204
See also contents list of Chap. iii.
Repeal of the Union, 11, 55
Reserve, Army of, 239
Reservoirs, 289, 290, 301
Resident Magistrates, 212
Retailers, dislike of, 46
Revenue, effect of smuggling on, 36
statistics, &c., of, 63
inability to raise required sums in Ireland, 51
inadequate to meet expenditure, 52
questionable sources of, 60, 61
amount of, before Union, 47, 50
development of new sources of, 64
Commissioner, improper appointment, 132
See also contents list of Chap. ii.
men, life saving by, 249
Police, 208
Service, organisation, and difficulties, &c., of, 183, 256, 257, 266; and see also under "Smuggling"
Reversion, offices granted in, 171, 177 *n.*
Revolutionary spirit, hostility of Catholic Church to, 11, 138
Ribbonmen, 199
Rice, importation of, 121
Richmond Asylum, 288
Penitentiary, 142, 284
Ringsend, 253
Rivers, gunboats for defence of, 227
Roads, construction of, 94, 185, 193
Roads, advances for, 62
survey of, 191 *n.*
repair of, 122, 193
neglect of, in Limerick, 300
Grand Jury powers as to, 193
to be blocked in case of invasion, 225
See also Chap. xi.
Robbery, 213 *n.*
Robes, State, custody of, 192
Royal Barracks, 186 *n.*
Royal Canal, 265, 274
water supply from, 290
Royal mistresses on Pension List, 48
Schools, Ulster, 161
Rum, consumption of, &c., 24, 29
Rundale, 90
Runners, cars mounted on, 272
Rural districts. See under "Country" or "County"
Rushes used for roofing, 101
Rye meal, 121

Sabbatarianism, 141 *n.*
Sackville Street, 50 *n.*, 296
Sailors, disbanded, 122 *n.*, 280
grant for recruiting, 48
merchant, improved position of, 267
held in little esteem, 231
coin exported for pay to, 70
shipwrecked, 119
See also contents list of Chap. x.
St. Malo, 250 *n.*
Saldanha, wreck of, 248
Sale of appointments, 177
Salt, import of, 29
meat and provisions, 23, 28, 79, 80, 105, 268
"Sand desks," 154
Sanitation. See Chap. xii.
Saunders' Newsletter, 115
Saurin, 150
Scaldhead, 128 *n.*
"Scapular," suspicions of, 143

Scavenging, 292, 300
"Scholar, poor," 119
School-books, cheap, publication of, 152
Schoolmaster, as gaol official, importance of, recognised, 217, 221
Schools, Protestant control of, 83 *n.*, 128; see also contents list of Chap. vi.
Scientific progress, effects on sea life, 268
laboratory, 95
Scientist arrested, 119
Scotch soldiers, 233 *n.*
Scotland, 263, 275
Scripture-reading, 142, 152, 159
Scullabogue, 8
Sea carriage, 123, 277
power, 222
See Chap. x.
Seaboard, relief of distress on, 123
Seahorse, wreck of, 248
Seamen. See "Sailors"
Secret Commissions, 171
Secret societies, 198
Secretary, Chief, borrowing to pay the army, 55 *n.*
rise in importance of, 178, 180, 181
Under, power of, 4, 180, 181
Sedition, fears of, &c., 107, 155 *n.*
Seigneurs, Grand, landlords as, 84
Self-control, national lack of, 92
Self-sufficing country, Ireland a, 80, 305
Semaphore, 227 *n.*
Seminary, 163
Servants, ability to write not thought desirable, 155 *n.*
"Services," system of, 89
Sessions, Quarter and Petty, 209, 210
Sewers, 291
Shalee, 30
"Shame" punishments, 156
Shanavests, 201
Shannon, canals to, 50 *n.*, 265, 274, 277
navigation of, 264
defence of, 227
Sheep, 79, 202
Sheriff, 194, 203
Sheriff's officer, 228
Shillelagh, 108, 201
Ship-canal proposed, 262
Shipping return, 28 *n.*
routes, 185
See also Chap. x.
Ships, local production of, 34
Shipwrecks, 119, 247, 248
Shoals, 247, 264
Shoemakers, rules of, 44
Shopkeepers, 73, 99
Shops, lighting of, 294, 295
Sick, care of, 167; and see also contents list of Chap. xii.
Side-cars, 275 *n.*
Signals, 227, 248
Silence as a punishment, 221
Silver coinage, lack of, and substitutes for, &c., 71–74
mine, 30
"notes," 72
Sinecures, ecclesiastical, 130
in public service, 173, 175, 177, 182, 303
Sinking Fund, 67
Sires, pedigree, 96
Skibbereen, 266
Skilled labour, hours of, 42
mechanics, restriction on emigration of, 259
Skim-milk, 81
Slane coal mine, 30
Slates, use of, in schools, 154
Slaughter-houses, 292
Sleeping accommodation, 125, 218, 284
"Slide cars," 272
Sligo, Custom House, 179 *n.*
coaching to, 275
provost of, and theatre, 205
Lord, 8; and see Illustrations

Slums, 282, 296
Smallpox, 278
Smugglers as soldiers and sailors, 232
Smuggling, 183, 184, 202
effect of, on revenue, 36
magistrates disinclined to check, 205
special forces to cope with, 208
efforts to save life at wrecks, 249
audacious methods of, 256, 257
effect on trade of towns, 265
Snow, obstacle to coaching, 272
Sociable element in amusements, 109
Social functions, Lord Lieutenant's part in, 181
questions, treatment of, 195, 305
Socialism, State, 69
Socialistic movements, hostility of Catholic Church to, 11
Societies assisting industry and agriculture, 93, 95, 96
State assistance to, 95, 96, 152, 167
oath-bound, disturbing influences of, 198–201
Soda, disinfection by, 283
Soldiers, disbanded, 122 *n.*, 280
coin exported for pay to, 70
engaged in survey work, 191 *n.*
outrages by, 197
See also Chap. ix.
Solitude as a punishment, 221
Soup, 125
kitchens, 121
South of Ireland, industrial weakness of, 92
place-hunting in, 169
emigration from, 259
See also under "Munster"
South-western districts, distress in, 123
Sovereign replaces the guinea, 75
"Sovereign of Belfast," the, 299
Spanish dollars, 73
"Specialising" system in Irish production, 21
Spherical Trigonometry, 161 *n.*
Spies, 118, 119, 199
Spinning, 21, 80
taught in schools, 155
Spinster, explanation of term, 80 *n.*
Spirits, production and export of, 24, 25, 31
import of, 29
consumption discouraged, 25, 59
as a cause of outrages, 59
increased taxation on, 59, 64, 66
smuggling of, 256
Sports and amusements, 83, 107–111
Stage. See "Theatre"
coaches, 270
Stamp duties, 62
duty on newspapers, 112
Office, 59, 184; diminished importance of, 195; produce of, 63, 64
Starch manufacture, 37
duty on, 184
Starvation, population always on brink of, 91
on shipboard, 260
State, the, and encouragement of agriculture, 93
favour to Established Church, 128
relations with Catholic Church, 10, 17, 138
gains influence over Presbyterian, 134
witnesses maintained by, 207
visit to theatre, 13
prosecutions, 13
distressed for money, 55
lotteries conducted by, 60, 110
interference with individual freedom, 118
and relief of poverty, 120–126

State department to control education, 160
direct control of public works by, 188
interference with trade, 35–39
loans to distressed manufacturers, 33
attitude to workmen, 43, 195
advances for works, 62
widening functions of, 68, 69
Socialism, 69
department for Dublin paving, &c., 298
aiding emigration, 307
See also under "Government" and contents lists of Chaps. vii. and viii.
Stationery, supply of, to Government, 188, 189
Statistical departments, founding of, 189
surveys, 97
Statistics, lack of, 53
Steamers, introduction and effect of, 23 *n.*, 121
Steevens' Hospital, 280, 284
Stevenson, J., 162
Stirabout, 78
Stolen goods, searching for, 203 *n.*
Storms, 223, 248
Story-tellers, 117
Stradbally, 29
Strait-waistcoat, 289
Strangers, hostility to, 45
Strangford, 251
Strategic roads, 191 *n.*
Straw beds, 218, 284
hats, 96
improperly dried, used for thatching, 82
Streets, improvement of, 296, 300
Strikes, 44, 123
Subordinates, excessive trust in, 173
Subsidies, State, to societies, 95, 96, 152
Subsidies to foreign powers, effect on currency, 70
Subsistence farming, 90, 91, 305
Sugar import, 28, 29
tax, 58, 59
Suir river, 274
Sullivan, T., 169
Summary jurisdiction, 209
Sunday football, 107 *n.*
traffic, obstruction to, 141 *n.*
Superannuation scheme introduced, 178
"Superintending Magistrates" 210
Superstitions, 144, 145
"Support home industry," antiquity of cry, 41
Surgical hospital, 125
Survey of bogs, 94
Ordnance, 191
trigonometrical, 191
statistical, 97, 190
"Suspects," law as to, 118, 119
Sutton ship-canal proposed, 262
Swift's Hospital, 287
Swilly, Lough, 248, 265
Swords, highwaymen near, 272
Symes, 169

TABLETS, educational, 154
Tailoring, 80, 106
Tanners, 58, 79
Tariffs, 20, 57
Taxation, ecclesiastical, 129
for Paving Board, 291, 294
slight before the Union, 47
indirect substituted for direct, 58, 65
assimilation to English model, 59
trivial and unproductive methods of, 55
relief of, 62, 195
local, 67
present burden less sharply felt, 65
See also contents list of Chap. ii.

Taxes, collection of, 67
Tea import, 29
tax, 58, 66
vendor's licence, 58
Teachers, pupil, use of, 153
training college for, 153, 160
Technical education, early equivalent of, 116
Telegraphs, 63
effect on navigation, 268
mechanical, Dublin to Galway, 227
Templeogue, 289
Tenants. See contents list of Chap. iii.
Tenement houses, 104
Tenpenny-pieces, 73
Territorial forces, 222
Textile industries, 31–33, 35; and see also "Cotton," "Woollen," "Linen"
Thatch, 82, 282 *n.*
Theatre Royal, 295
Theatres, 13, 115, 141 *n.*, 205
Theological College, Presbyterian, 162
Thieves, 193 *n.*, 294
Thomas Street, 5
"Thrashers," the, 201
Thrashing improperly done, 81
Tidewaiters, 169, 255
Tillage, prominence of, 21, 22, 77, 78
dairies combined with, 81
in east and midlands, 85
in rundale, 90
encouragement of, by Irish Parliament, 93
tithes on, 130
Tipperary, corn-growing in, 22
coal mines, 29
dairy farms, 81
Tithe proctors, 129, 130, 228
Tithes, 129, 130, 306
disturbances caused by, 201
clerical magistrates not impartial judges in cases concerning, 204
Tobacco import, 28, 29
tax, 58, 59, 66
smuggling of, 256
Tobin, 169
Tokens, issue of, 73, 75
Tontine, 61, 62 *n.*
Tools, local production of, 31
Topography, 191 *n.*
Torture, 212 *n.*
Townland, 208 *n.*
fine, 208
Towns, classes in, 99
wages, dietary, housing, &c., in, 103–107
theatres, lectures, &c., in, 115
epidemics, sanitation, water supply, &c. See contents list of Chap. xii.
Tracts, distribution of, 148
Trade. See chap. i.
Trade unions, 43–45, 228
Traders, Dublin, influence in Catholic Committee, 6
lessening of Government interference with, 195
Trafalgar, effects of, 222
embargo for recruiting purposes, 38
Tralee, 275
Tramore, 248
Transport, difficulty, &c., of, and improvements made in, 60, 94, 267; and see also Chap. xi.
wrecked, 248
Trawlers, hostility to, 266
Treasurer, County, 194
Treasury British, reform of Civil Service by, 175 *n.*
superior to Irish Treasury in its control of departments, 175 *n.*, 179, 183 *n.*
Treasury, Irish, abolition of, 54
distress of, 55, 304
lack of control over departments, 175 *n.*
completely controlled by Chief Secretary, 179

Tribal period, relics of, 90
Trigonometrical survey, 191
Trigonometry, spherical, 161 *n.*
Trim, 73 *n.*
Trinity College, Dublin, 4, 128, 164, 165
Troy, Archbishop, 137, 164
"Truck" system, 89
Tullamore. See Illustrations
Turbulence, 44, 115, 198
  partly due to whiskey-drinking, 59
Turf, 249; and see also "Peat"
Turks, vagrant, 119 *n.*
Turnkeys, 217
Typhus, causes of, 56, 121, 297, epidemic, 280–286, 301
Tyrone, 265

Ulster, political changes in, 8, 134, 135, 163
  arming in 1829, 16
  linen industry. See "Linen"
  oatmeal diet in, 78
  commercial characteristics of, 93
  appearance of typhus in, 280
  religious strife in, 199
  distress in, 122, 123
  Royal Schools, 161
  emigration from, 260
  behaviour of recruits from, 233 *n.*
  See also "North of Ireland"
Undenominational education, 151, 158, 160
Under Secretary. See "Secretary, Under"
Underwriters, 258
Unemployment, relief of, 33, 167
"Unfortunates," treatment of, 124, 140 *n.*
Union, economic effects of, 20, 21, 305; and see Chap. i.
  financial arrangements for, and effects of. See contents list of Chap. ii.
  bishops and peers, 131
Union, ecclesiastical reforms, subsequent to, 132
  bribery, 49, 131
  Irish finance previous to, 47–50
  borrowings, subsequent to, 54, 66
  Grattan's acquiescence in, 54
  compensations to boroughmongers and officials, 55
  movement for Repeal of, 11, 55
  reform of Civil Service after, 174
  moderating influence introduced by, 303
United Irishmen, 4, 5, 51
  Catholic Church not favourable to, 139
  See also "Rebels" and Illustrations
United States. See "America"
University, development of, in Belfast, 162
  Dublin, proposed Catholic college in, 164
  education, Trinity College, 165

Vaccination, 278, 279
Vassal, analogy between tenant and, 88, 89
Vegetation, spontaneous growth of, 77
Ventilation, lack of, 56, 101
Veterans, 68
Veto on appointment of Catholic bishops, proposal for, 10, 17
Vice, Association for Discountenancing, 148 *n.*
Viceregal robes, custody of, 192
Viceroy. See "Lord Lieutenant"
Village partnerships, 90
  removal of, 102 *n.*
Vinegar, 184
Volunteering from militia and yeomanry to regulars, 236, 245

Volunteers, analogy to yeomanry, 242, 243 *n.*
local, 240

WAGES, rates of, 42, 89, 106, 201
effect of currency troubles on, 72
purchasing power of, 105, 106
to be low on relief works, 123
Wakefield, 32, 77, 78 *n.*, 97, 190, 276 *n.*
Wakes, 109
Walmisley, Dr., 144
Walsh, J., & Co., 37 *n.*
War, economic and financial effects of, 21, 50
embargoes caused by, 38
Warburton, Maj., 157 *n.*
Warders, prison, 217–221
Warmth, tax on, 56
Watchmen, 212–215, 300
Water carriage, 277
Guard, Preventive, 208
supply, Dublin and other towns, 289, 290, 291, 300, 301
"Watercourse, the city," 289 *n.*
Waterford city, mail communications, 263, 270, 275
canal, 274
Leper Hospital, 280
arrangement between factions in corporation, 299
Wide Streets Commissioners, 300
inefficient police, 300
Reginald's Tower used as gaol, 219
impressment at, 253
fisheries, 266 *n.*, 267 *n.*
port and harbour of, 263, 264
Waterford county, dairy farms, 81
election, 15
Watermen, 249
Weavers, Dublin, custom in times of distress, 33 *n.*
Weaving as an adjunct to farming, 26, 91
a domestic industry, 80
by power, introduction of, 21
taught in schools, 155
see also "Woollen," "Cotton," and "Linen"
Weeding, 122
Wellesley, Lord, 12, 13, 176, 181
Sir Arthur, organisation of Dublin police, &c., 212, 236 *n.*; and see Illustrations
Wellington, Duke of, 16, 17, 233, 236, 246
West of Ireland, rundale in, 91
canals to, 265
defence of coast, 223
dangers of coast, 247
See also "Connaught"
West Indies, trade with, 28, 264
Westmoreland Street, 295
Westport. See Illustrations
Wexford Bridge, 8
fisheries, 267 *n.*
Wheat, 22, 78, 104; and see also "Corn"
Whipping as punishment for trade combination, 43
Whiskey, 24, 59; and see also under "Spirits"
Whitelaw, Rev. Dr., 190
Whitewash, 283
Wickham, W., 28, 134 *n.*
Wicklow gold mine, 30
United Irishmen, 4
Wide Streets Commissioners, Dublin, 296
Cork and Waterford, 300
Widows, 49, 68
William III., 243 *n.*
Window tax, 56, 183
Windows, lack of, 101
Wine, 24, 29, 256
Witnesses, Crown, 206, 207
Women, clothing of, 106
spinning by, 80
See also "Female"

Wooden water mains, 291
Wool, disinfection of, 255
sheep reared for sake of, 80
Woollen manufacture as a domestic industry, 80
decay of, 21, 32, 33
process of "carding," 201 *n.*
Workmen, position and treatment of, 42–46
objection to education of, 155 *n.*
Works, Board of, powers, 69
abuses in office, 173
origin and development of, 186, 187
Works, defensible, 225
public, advances for, 62, 63, 67; as relief measures, 122; Grand Jury powers, 193
Wrestling matches, 107

YARN, spinning of, 80
Yeomanry, cost of, 51
organisation, &c., 230, 234, 240–245
Yorkshire, competition from, 31
Youghal, 266
Young offenders, penitentiary for, 125

THE END

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